By Waltraud Bayer

The Unofficial Market: Art and Dissent, 1956–88

With the October Revolution of 1917, art became the domain of the state. The Communist Party attempted to establish itself as the sole patron of the arts in the USSR, and the art market was transformed into a system of official patronage. Art became an important tool in the service of the larger goals of the government, the Party, and society; art lost its independence and autonomy. Private patronage was reduced to the minimum due to a series of decrees issued in the immediate post-Revolutionary era that sought to ban collecting almost in its entirety, along with any form of privately owned art, antiques, and valuables. Private collections were seized and nationalized, integrated into state museums and opened to the public. Despite such restrictions private initiative proved to be a decisive factor in preserving art, particularly art that was not held in high esteem or even discredited by the Soviet regime—modernist, avant-garde, and religious art—and later, beginning in the 1950s, contemporary art that was not in line with Socialist Realism and known under various names: "nonconformist," "dissident," "unofficial," or "other art" (Fig. 1).

This article focuses on the latter. It shows how private patronage was instrumental in financing, exhibiting, and generally preserving this tabooed art, highlighting the most significant events in the formation and development of the "other art" scene. It sheds light on the decisive role of individual collectors and patrons who—in some cases despite their (formal) adherence to the Party—felt committed to supporting this art in private. As organizers of exhibitions outside the official channels some provided a much-needed forum for the new, alternative art, either in apartments or in institutions within the USSR as well as abroad; others helped document the history of the movement. Many simply collected this young art, which had hardly any state funding. With the proclamation of *perestroika* unofficial art practically overnight received official recognition. After it fetched record prices at the first Sotheby's auction held in Moscow in 1988, it was ideally suited to represent the late Soviet Union abroad.

The essay is based on extensive research in public and private archives, museums, and collections in Russia and abroad, most notably the holdings of the Russian Department at the Zimmerli Art Museum, as well as interviews with Professor Norton T. Dodge. The Zimmerli's comprehensive archive, extensive, well-organized library, and enormous, multifaceted collection, combined with its storehouse of valuable research materials (including catalogues), allow for a nuanced reconstruction of the nonconformist art movement and the specifics of collecting this art in the (post-)Soviet Union and the West. These materials reveal a heterogeneous movement that comprised greatly varying local and national subgroupings, from its early beginnings in the 1950s to its climax in the late 1980s–early 1990s, in addition to the subsequent developments that occurred after the fall of Communism. They also shed light on the specifics of art collecting in general and unofficial art collecting in particular, as well as on local and foreign collections.

The significance of the Dodge Collection—which today is by far the most important nonconformist art collection worldwide—lies in its scholarly approach to the material. The holdings, now publicly accessible and well documented, allow for a deep understanding of Soviet and Western collections of unofficial art, their similarities and differences, and the many myths surrounding the topic—among them the widespread (and untrue) allegations that the movement survived largely due to the active role of foreign patrons.

Fig. 1
Ülo Sooster
(1924–1970)
Untitled, 1953
Ink on paper
13.5 x 19 cm
Dodge Collection. 07488

The last few years have witnessed the documentation of numerous former Soviet collections of "unofficial art." Whereas many of the Soviet collections were sold after 1989/91 (some major holdings went to Dodge himself), Dodge used his know-how and expertise to sharpen the profile of his collection. Most of the other well-known collections of this art cater to a local clientele and stress the accomplishments of their respective founders (the Matti Milius and Tatiana Kolodzei collections are an exception to this). Dodge, himself a scientist, familiar with the USSR, its culture and dominant language, shared many characteristics with his Soviet colleagues: He collected on the largely unofficial market, thereby relying on a network of middlemen—which meant that he was both a potential target for repression and that he witnessed the Soviet intelligentsia's dominant role in collecting. Paradoxically, Dodge's final rise coincided with the demise of the *intelligenty*. In the following, his unique contribution to the "other art" will be compared with that of his Soviet counterparts.

A License to Collect: "Protection Certificates" for the Intelligentsia

Art collecting in the USSR was the domain of the intelligentsia. Contrary to the patrons of the pre-Revolutionary era, who mainly came from the nobility and the bourgeoisie, the quintessential Soviet art collector was a member of the intellectual or cultural elite. Members of the learned professions (who frequently were either Party members or close to the political elite) were the

only ones with the skills, the contacts, the knowledge, and, above all, the economic and cultural wherewithal to acquire art and assess its significance.

Due to these individuals' tenacious efforts, private art collecting continued throughout the entire Soviet period—despite the legal restrictions. Following the Revolution, private property was outlawed by various decrees—in banking, industry, commerce, real estate, even in art. Beginning in mid-1918 a series of regulations was enacted that legalized the confiscations in the cultural sphere, partly post festum. All major art collections of the court, nobility, bourgeoisie, and the church were seized and nationalized. Art and antiques dealers were forced to register. The import and export of art and cultural artifacts was overseen by the state. A decree issued on October 5, 1918, represented the most aggravating provision for owners of private art property; it obliged private individuals, societies, and institutions alike to register all artistic and antiquarian property with Narkompros (People's Commissariat of Education and Enlightenment).[1] The strict legal regulations required the registration of both art collections and precious objects. More restrictive decrees followed in the years to come.

At the same time, Soviet law provided a loophole for art lovers to hold on to their possessions. Narkompros issued special permits to collectors who registered; thus works of art could remain as private property if a special protection certificate (*okhrannaia gramota*) was granted. The much-coveted certificates were issued after thorough review of the applicants, who often were active in the cultural field. These certificates constituted the only legal means of maintaining collections in private hands. In reality, however, they granted at best limited protection from arbitrary assaults by soldiers, Party officials, or simply the mob. It is important to note that even those private collections that had been officially registered and licensed could be confiscated at any time. The inadequate preservation of precious items or incomplete inventories led to confiscation of all or some of these works by the state. The same was true of objects exchanged among collectors not approved by Narkompros; even minor changes to a collection's composition that were not reported or, worse, the failure to register at all could result in immediate confiscation, dispossession, and the arrest of the collector.

The October 5, 1918, decree was much criticized. Its critics included the renowned art historian, artist, and collector Alexandre Benois. After receiving the protection certificate Benois complained that he had "more problems than advantages," as he could no longer freely dispose of his holdings. In 1923 he regretted that "formerly, art property brought pleasure to the owner; today, only unpleasantness. This explains the dying away of the entire collectors' culture."[2]

Initially, many collectors applied for the licenses; the archive of the Hermitage Museum alone contains over one thousand license applications.[3] With the increasing consolidation of Bolshevik power, however, the negative aspects of the "protection grants" became manifest: Those who had registered were identified. Thus, registration helped improve the state's administrative access to "protected" collections.

Though collecting was tolerated, it was by no means encouraged. On the contrary: In the post-Revolutionary years collectors were routinely criticized and attacked for their alienation from the "serious" concerns of the present (building the Communist future), for their petty-bourgeois taste, for their "un-Soviet" interest in the past, and for their submersion in *byt,* the banal realm of everyday life.[4] In a similar manner, private patronage, which traditionally had guaranteed the economic survival of many artists and stimulated artistic development, was declared obsolete; the old-style *Maecenas* was seen as a relic of the past, no longer needed or appropriate.

The Bolsheviks were fully confident that their revolution would create a totally new culture, one that would eventually permeate every aspect of life and art. The Socialist system was to ensure the economic well-being of all artists and create a monopoly on patronage. Whereas the traditional patron had granted artists commissions limited to a particular work or time period, the "art worker" of the Socialist state was given an overall commission: putting his or her work in the service of the new regime.[5] As the Party's stranglehold on artistic life intensified, conformity was enforced. Unions and associations were controlled, members screened for their social background and political views. Artworks on proletarian topics were increasingly commissioned. The theme of honest toil was endlessly repeated in realist art, while abstract and non-objective work—which had dominated the production of the avant-garde—was condemned and marginalized. The state organized official trips to *kolkhozy* (collective farms) and industrial plants to help artists translate Soviet economic and technological successes into a legible visual language. The year 1932 marked the transition of all "units of the Soviet art front" to a centralized system of state commissions, with the various disciplines organized into uniform sub-units. The Union of Soviet Artists, established in 1939, not only monitored artists' adherence to the doctrine of Socialist Realism, it also functioned as a professional corporation of sorts. It granted its members financial aid (travel expenses, pensions, subsidies in case of illness and disablement); awarded prizes and other accolades; bestowed a certain social status alongside special privileges (studios, materials, housing, holidays at union-run facilities); and was a source of employment, providing its artist-members with commissions.

The rigid Soviet aesthetic canon, in combination with the system of monopolized art patronage, facilitated the re-emergence of the collecting community. With the proclamation of Socialist Realism in 1934, the last remnants of other art forms and groupings were forbidden, proscribed, and liquidated. Modern and avant-garde art, icon painting, much of the Tsarist legacy, and, later, nonconformism were neglected by the purchasing commissions that acquired art for museums and other institutions as well as in art education. Many artists not adhering to Socialist Realism were thus deprived of material support. Their work was censured as "formalist"—a term that came to be applied to all art lacking in overt socio-political merit.

Private collectors filled the gap. The need to preserve, restore, and even rescue elements of the country's cultural past (and present) that no longer corresponded to the official canon motivated many a collector. (The state—contrary to its ideological claims—allowed private initiative if it operated within certain limits; it thereby conceded omissions in its own policy, albeit indirectly.) Private collectors acted as a substitute, a corrective to the unyielding official values, with both sides fully aware of their roles. Besides, proscribed art was available at the lowest prices. Knowledgeable collectors understood this early on, and thus assembled holdings that after the collapse of Communism often brought great wealth to their owners.

New Art: From Thaw to Stagnation

Nikita Khrushchev's Secret Speech at the Twentieth Communist Party Congress in 1956 ushered in a new era for the arts, as it did for so many aspects of Soviet life. Echoing Khrushchev's words, Mikhail Suslov, the Party's chief ideologist at the time, criticized Stalin's "cult of personality." He also declared that under Stalin "creative initiative had been inevitably stifled and crushed,"[6] and that Soviet art had become "sweet and empty."[7] Widespread attacks were launched against former artistic supporters of Stalin's dictums. As a result, the art establishment and its officialdom began to re-evaluate Socialist Realism. The focus was on broadening the former dogmatic interpretation of Socialist Realism; the concept itself as well as the institutions monitoring it remained in place. The Party attempted to define a new line in art, and came out in favor of greater freedom of style and subject matter (both of which had been monitored by an omnipotent censorship apparatus). Artists could no longer be denounced as formalists and their works withheld from exhibitions. Many changes took place on the organizational level. Hardliners were replaced by more liberal-minded functionaries. Stalinist art was removed from the state museums. Specialized stores were opened for the sale of paintings, prints, and sculpture. (Soviet art was sold publicly for the first time since the end of the NEP [1921–28]. Art was no longer to be treated only as a form of propaganda; it was also seen as a consumer item.) In addition, spacious artists' studios were constructed in the main cultural centers.

In other related developments, efforts were now made to improve both the economic well-being and the professional-creative milieu of Soviet artists.[8] Khrushchev's slogan "Back to Lenin" allowed for the reinterpretation of the long-tabooed avant-garde and modernist art, and their re-orientation toward the national heritage. The oeuvres of painters once deemed "formalist"—artists such as Robert Falk and Natan Altman—were publicly shown. Yet the work of the more radical avant-garde figures (Kazimir Malevich, Vasilii Kandinsky, Marc Chagall, Vladimir Tatlin, Pavel Filonov), a number of whom were practitioners of abstraction, remained discredited; the same was true of abstract art in general.[9]

What all this meant for the contemporary scene was that art could now originate from new, though officially approved, content, and that innovation in form and idiom was necessary.[10] To signify the relevance of renewal, the doors to Western art were partially opened. One of the major developments in this regard was the Sixth International Youth and Student Festival, which took place in Moscow's Sokolniki Park in 1957. Young artists from fifty-two countries showed over 4,500 works in three pavilions in the park. For the first time in over twenty-five years, Soviet audiences had the opportunity to learn about the latest international developments. The "profusion of styles, the vitality of imagination, the variety of experimentation, and the sheer freedom and exuberance"[11] of the work on display made a huge impression on those who attended—especially Soviet art students, who could watch and even paint alongside foreign artists. Among those who visited the show were the artists Vladimir Nemukhin and Anatolii Zverev, who went on to become two of the most influential members of the unofficial art movement (Fig. 2). Nemukhin later remarked that they were able "to recognize in foreign artists their own selves and their own strivings."[12] Zverev, inspired by the work of the American abstractionist Garry Colman featured at Sokolniki, introduced abstract elements along with a greater degree of spontaneity and emotionalism into his work. The results were far from Socialist Realism, and, in Zverev's words, "disturbed his professors."[13]

Fig. 2
Vladimir Nemukhin
(b. 1925)
Unfinished Solitaire, undated
Oil and playing cards on canvas
110.3 x 80.4 cm
Dodge Collection. 05212

Fig. 3
Oscar Rabin
(b. 1928)
Barrack, 1961
Oil on cardboard
48.6 x 68.6 cm
Dodge Collection. 06364

Despite a few setbacks—most notably, the backlash that occurred in the aftermath of the Manezh exhibition of 1962—these liberalizing developments continued until the mid-1960s.[14] It was a time of artistic independence and innovation. Intellectual circles even discussed the end of censorship and the abandonment of Socialist Realism as the only permitted style.[15] The search for a way out of an oppressive system led to the emergence of the "unofficial" or "nonconformist" artists. While these artists never represented a unified movement, they shared similar problems and goals. As the name given to them suggests, their activities took on a political coloration (despite their protestations to the contrary); the terms "unofficial" and "nonconformist" implied an opposition to a sanctioned official, conformist art.[16] Yet it is important to note that for years this alternative ("other") art did not operate in direct opposition to the state institutions.

Among the first patrons of the unofficial art scene was the Moscow art historian and critic Ilya Tsirlin, who lectured on contemporary art and organized private showings of the work of the alternative young Soviet artists. Unofficial exhibitions were the visual equivalent of the literary *samizdat* (self-published) movement, though they required much greater effort. For this reason, prominent figures of the cultural and scientific establishment who promoted and/or collected this art acquired a special significance. The pianist Sviatoslav Richter, who later donated his collection to the Moscow Museum of Private Collections, supported Dmitrii Krasnopevtsev. The composer Andrei Volkonsky helped the Lianozovo group, primarily its leader, the painter and poet Evgenii Kropivnitsky. The art photographer Evgenii Nutovich, an employee of the Tretyakov Gallery and apart from Leonid Talochkin the main collector of Moscow nonconformist art at that time, founded his collection early on, around 1959/60. Moreover, many a collector of avant-garde art—such as

Fig. 4
Discussion of apartment exhibitions on the day of a closure, home of Oscar Rabin, Moscow, April 1975
Photograph by Valentin Serov
Dodge Collection Archive. PH00356

George Costakis and the couple Valerii Dudakov and Marina Kashuro—promoted the young nonconformist art scene in various ways, seeing in it a continuation of the avant-garde movement of the early twentieth century. The interest in unofficial art soon spread to the scientific community. Its members were well paid, publicly highly regarded, and were able to secure venues for art exhibitions at their institutes or clubs. Beginning in the early 1960s, research institutions—among them the Kurchatov Institute of Atomic Physics, the Institute of Biochemistry (both Moscow-based), and the newly founded Novosibirsk think tank Akademgorodok—supplied nonconformist art with exhibition premises.[17]

Gradually, a small domestic market for unofficial art emerged. In addition, foreigners within and without the USSR became aware of the new art. Already in 1957 Western scholars and curators showed interest in the "second Russian avant-garde." Around this time, New York's Museum of Modern Art acquired works by the young Anatolii Zverev, who had been awarded a prize at the Youth Festival. Diplomats and correspondents accredited to Moscow began attending exhibitions organized in private apartments and occasionally acquired artworks; others helped the movement become established abroad. Oscar Rabin, for instance, was invited to participate in exhibitions abroad, at first in London in 1964, later in San Francisco (Fig. 3). This also explains why Alexander Glezer, a young, enthusiastic collector, invited foreign diplomats and journalists to the group showing of twelve unofficial artists he organized in early 1967 at the Druzhba (Friendship) Workers' Club, in one of the outlying areas of Moscow.[18] Artists and patrons repeatedly managed to hoodwink the censors and outwit the authorities. Yet the latter increasingly closed down shows or stipulated harsher specifications in the organization of exhibitions (Fig. 4).

Fig. 5
Evgenii Rukhin
(1943–1976)
Untitled (Two red, two black hands), 1975
Oil and acrylic on canvas
70 x 66 cm
Dodge Collection. 12896

Under Brezhnev, many policies of the pre-thaw era were reinstated. The ideological net tightened, censorship was renewed, discipline and conformity were imposed, and artists were threatened. Often subjected to cruel repression, artists were forced to adjust their work or face possible loss of employment or income from commissions, imprisonment, assignment to a psychiatric ward, or even death. By the end of the 1960s, the young alternative art had retreated from public view; simultaneously, an underground culture had come into being that was "self-sustaining and… expanding." Unofficial literature was published, discussion groups met in private, and very soon, an unofficial art movement emerged that "paralleled and intersected with the larger dissident movement." These artists earned their living as architects, graphic artists, and book illustrators; they did not belong to the painting section of the Artists' Union—the section that was under the closest scrutiny of the Soviet authorities. (Some were even expelled from the Illustrators' and Draftsmen's Union, the only guarantee of welfare benefits.) The "serious" easel work that they did at home was not exhibited in state-run galleries, but, beginning in the early 1960s, in private.[19]

Aside from some notable exceptions, the latter part of the Brezhnev era and the early part of the Gorbachev era were characterized by a crackdown on the arts and other aspects of culture. Dubbed the "era of stagnation" (*zastoi*), the decade 1976–86 was one of "stifling conservatism, reaction, and conformity."[20] The state sought to crush the general dissident movement by any means necessary; the movement's leaders were imprisoned and/or forced into exile. The period also took its toll on the unofficial art scene. Despite the exhibitions mentioned above the personal situation of many artists was often catastrophic. Arrests continued, as did other forms of repression, which in some cases—such as that of the artist Evgenii Rukhin, who died in a studio fire at the age of thirty-two—ended fatally (Fig. 5).

By 1977, when an officially sponsored exhibition of Soviet art was held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York,[21] it looked as if official channels were opening up for unofficial artists; in fact, the opposite was true. As Michael Scammell wrote, the opening was "small and selective"; its point was "not to embrace unofficial art, but rather to absorb and stifle the movement, and to ensure that their members no longer stimulated unrest and dissent." Besides, most unofficial artists were not admitted to any union and could not show their work in state-run galleries, only in private apartments. The few officially granted exhibitions of the mid-1970s, therefore, were not "harbingers of better things to come, but… a last empty gesture." As a result, many unofficial artists emigrated around that time (Figs. 6, 7).[22]

Foreign Patronage: Norton T. Dodge

In general, Soviet cultural policies supported and popularized those artists whose work corresponded to the official ideological views—or at least did not criticize them in public. Official artists, though deprived of much artistic autonomy, were provided with social and material prerequisites; that is, they were financially much better off than their underground counterparts, who enjoyed free choice in subject matter and artistic strategy.

Beginning in the late 1950s the number of artists not registered with any of the Artists' Union's various subdivisions—that is, unofficial artists, as opposed to the official artists—rose. Many unofficial artists thereby relinquished many privileges that were part of the state system. Hence Boris Groys characterizes

Fig. 6
Alexander Glezer and others at the *Second Fall Open-Air Show*, Izmailovsky Park, Moscow, September 29, 1974
Photographer unknown
Dodge Collection Archive.
PH00631

Fig. 7
Exhibition at the Palace of Culture, VDNKh, Moscow, September 1975
Pictured, left to right, top row: Vitalii Dlugy, Leonid Talochkin, Tatiana Kolodzei, Aleksei Tiapushkin, Marlen Spindler

Middle row, seated: Natta Konysheva, Anatolii Lepin, Yuri Tilman (behind Lepin), Vitalii Rakhman, Alik Goguadze, Sergei Bleze, Borukh (Boris Shteinberg), Oleg Kaplin

Front row, seated: Ian Levenshtein, Nika Shcherbakova, Irina Mesni-ankina, Tamara Makarova, unknown, Lilia Georgieva, Suren Arutiunian, Mikhail Roginsky, Mitia Koleichuk, Viacheslav Koleichuk

Photograph by Valentin Serov
Dodge Collection Archive. PH00337

these individuals as those who "fully knowingly position their cultural understanding vis-à-vis the dominant canon, understand themselves as independent producers and as a result attempt to create alternative cultural models."[23]

The participants in the nonconformist art scene produced on an almost exclusively private basis; their art was paid for, publicized, and disseminated by private patrons. Analogous to the variety of aesthetic criteria of the Soviet underground, there existed a complex network of multi-layered inter-markets. These semi-legal market structures were partly tolerated by the authorities and basically confined to Moscow, the capital of the USSR. Diplomats, foreign businessmen, but also the local intelligentsia were among the clientele of the nonconformist artists, who later fetched high prices during *perestroika.*

Private patrons discovered contemporary art gradually, either by commissioning portraits or, more commonly, as affirmative companions of the emerging new art, which despite the various subgroupings was collectively referred to as "unofficial." This "other art," as it was also called in the literal translation from the Russian (*drugoe iskusstvo*), developed as an important alternative to the official art sphere.

From the very beginning, this work caused a significant resonance in the West. The so-called second Russian avant-garde was held in high esteem artistically, and politically it helped serve Western interests. When the unofficial art community organized exhibitions, foreign journalists were invited to witness the events and ensure that photographs and reports would be publicized around the world. Western museums and galleries were eager to show the oeuvres of the young alternative artists. And the Soviet underground was in turn eager to sell at least some of its work. As a result, a considerable portion of the unofficial art production left the country—either in the luggage of émigrés or acquired by foreigners (diplomatic personnel, correspondents, scientists, and entrepreneurs). The exodus of that art, which has become important for today's Russia and the successor states, was first perceived as problematic in the late 1960s. With the growing exclusion of the alternative culture by the state, the USSR was threatened by the irretrievable loss of a major segment of the nonconformist art production.

The most renowned foreign collection was formed by the American university professor Norton T. Dodge. Like so many other foreign collectors he benefited from the dual cultural system that characterized the USSR beginning in the thaw. As a result of the low esteem in which unofficial art was held at home, much of it is now preserved in Western collections.[24] Dodge, a Russian studies specialist who in the 1950s studied at Cornell and Harvard Universities, made repeated trips to the Soviet Union in the years following Stalin's death in 1953. His first contacts with the alternative art scene date to 1962. With the help of local intermediaries and collectors, he acquired priceless holdings now considered the most representative worldwide of the development of the nonconformist movement from its beginnings to 1986/88. For years, Dodge—like many foreigners—concentrated on Moscow (as a result of the travel restrictions then in operation); from the 1970s he enlarged his aesthetic and regional spectra.

Relying on a close network within the Soviet Union (artists, middlemen, émigrés, fellow collectors, U.S. exchange students) and the U.S., Dodge acquired central works of the Moscow and Leningrad underground, and increasingly included works from the various analogous movements in the Soviet republics. Of the more than 25,000 works the collection numbers

today, roughly 16,000 are from Moscow and Leningrad; 4,000 come from the Baltic region; approximately 3,000 are from the Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus; and about 2,300 come from Transcaucasia and Central Asia. These figures document the systematic, scholarly strategy Dodge applied to his collecting (as opposed to most of his colleagues, who focused on a certain artist group or local or ethnic school).[25] It was Dodge's profound interest in the diversity of the movement and his knowledge of the USSR in general that limited the scope of his activities in the 1970s. His intense publishing activities combined with his role as organizer of exhibitions and symposia in the West met with growing resistance from the Soviet authorities (from 1976 to *perestroika*). After 1986/88 he was confronted with new obstacles—the international art market and the drastically rising prices of the art he favored. The majority of his acquisitions date to the 1980s and 1990s; a sizeable number of these works were once part of private Soviet collections, such as those of Alexander Glezer and Nina Stevens. The significance of the Dodge Collection, which represents the most comprehensive overview of the unofficial movement in the most important centers of the former USSR, has long been acknowledged internationally. Donated to Rutgers University in 1991, the collection is publicly accessible at the Zimmerli Art Museum and plays an active role in research and exhibitions alike.[26]

Underground Art in Soviet Collections

The latter part of the 1950s and the 1960s were—in line with the overall political climate under Khrushchev—probably the most auspicious years for Soviet collectors; they were still very few in number and enjoyed low prices on a vast market, along with a certain degree of freedom that manifested itself in publications, participation in exhibitions, and the formation of minor clubs. The collecting boom that hit the biggest cities and art centers of the Soviet Union after Stalin's death largely focused on the proscribed art movements, which in the official cultural-political interpretation for decades were regarded as synonymous with the former elite. As a result, this period witnessed the rise in avant-garde, modern art, and icon collections.

The renewed interest in icon painting was one of the novelties of the post-war years. With the onset of the Brezhnev era, however, the course changed again. Already in 1970 the government outlawed numismatics, which was considered a breeding ground for the illegal possession of and trade in hard currency; this decree was followed by a campaign against the so-called *valiutchiki* and *spekulianty* (speculators). Pressure was exerted on certain collectors. Some were robbed, physically attacked, and/or arrested; their collections were set on fire, sold secretly, or vanished in KGB channels. This development culminated in severe accusations against private collectors in the press and on television in the 1980s, overshadowing the first months of Gorbachev's rule.[27]

When art collecting was finally rehabilitated during *perestroika*, collecting the once discredited modern and avant-garde art as well as icon painting was interpreted as an act of rescuing the nation's historical heritage. The poet Evgenii Evtushenko thanked the Soviet modern and avant-garde art collectors—"the genuine Russian heroes"[28]—for their commitment, as they had collected "the Russian past at considerable risk, in order to preserve it for the future."

In his expression of gratitude Evtushenko omitted the (unofficial) present—the preservation of which was also of national significance. High-profile collectors such as Mart Lepp (Tallinn, Estonia), Matti Milius (Tartu, Estonia), Leonid

Fig. 8
Matti Milius (at left) with Ilya Kabakov and Lydia Sooster, visiting the Tartu Art Museum, Tartu, Estonia, May 1979
Photographer unknown
Dodge Collection Archive. PH01141

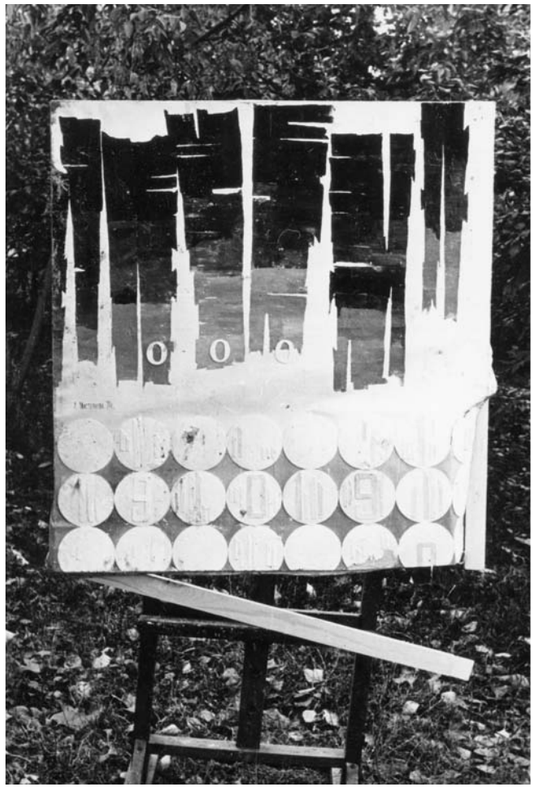
Talochkin, or Tatiana Kolodzei[29] (both Moscow) played a significant role in preserving nonconformist art. Their extensive, representative holdings, which today are partly accessible to the public, document a specific aspect of contemporary art patronage in the late USSR that has not been researched to the same extent as modern art collecting. To be sure, contemporary art was of minor relevance to the collecting community. But beginning with the repressions of artists in the Brezhnev era, the accent was placed on conserving contemporary art beyond the state canon.

Despite its quick acceptance by the West, nonconformist art was and remained a program for a minority in the USSR. Due to its ideological and stylistic differences from the work produced in the official sector—largely due to its high intellectual standards—nonconformist art production was little understood by or comprehensible to the broad public. The state-enforced exclusion since the mid-1970s led to the fact that the aesthetic value of the "other art" was understood only among a chosen few private circles. As a result, a small, closed market emerged that was based not on economic criteria, but on the aesthetics and content of the work; the patronage of the unofficial artists manifested itself in emotional support, modest pecuniary funds, occasional purchases, and in showings organized in private apartments. As documented in the Talochkin and Milius holdings, among others, the few important collections that were founded then and are still in existence consist largely of gifts and donations from artist-friends—making this an important characteristic of unofficial art collecting in general. Talochkin, Milius, and Lepp, who assembled their highly valuable collections of contemporary art at little or no financial expense, represented a special type of *homo collector sovieticus*. In contrast to the majority of their collector colleagues, who were members of the cultural or scientific elite, these three—along with most other collectors of unofficial art—deliberately avoided professional careers in order to focus on their one passion: collecting. Milius among other things earned his living as a night watchman (Fig. 8). His Kiev counterpart, Alexander Brei, though academically trained, did construction work, a profession that in the USSR went along with considerable spare

time. Talochkin, who left university just before the final exam to become a construction engineer, preferred to perform various odd jobs—working as a night watchman, an elevator operator, and a stoker—in order to devote himself fully to art. Lepp (who also worked as a graphic artist), Milius, Brei, and Talochkin, to mention but a few, were (and, in the case of the first three, still are) themselves creative personalities who in contemporary perception were considered eccentrics. They acted as companions of artists, organized exhibitions and meetings, and popularized the work represented in their respective collections. Occasionally they paid small sums, symbolic amounts, for the acquisition of a work.[30]

Although prices for other genres were low until well into the 1960s, in most cases the art collected clearly had the character of a commercial item; the economic value manifested itself in the purchase price or barter value. Even with art genres not "officially" collected—such as late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century art—there existed a comprehensible exchange between the acquired object and its unofficial value. Thus a price range generally known and accepted among collectors was established for works of Chagall, Malevich, or Kandinsky at a time when their art was still secretly held in state storerooms and vaults of public museums. In the case of the nonconformist sector, however, the reciprocity or, rather, the equivalence of value was much less clearly established. Whereas the demand and thus the prices for modern and avant-garde art rose continually since the thaw, nonconformist art long remained excluded from analogous increases in value. The product was too new, too "artificial," and comprehensible only to a small insider audience. Acceptance and esteem were relegated to the symbolic sphere; the understanding, attention, and devotion on the part of the viewer were the actual currency. The audience's readiness to pay, elsewhere an indication of the perceived attractiveness of a given item, was in this case at first not or only marginally an issue. The pecuniary value of the art was generally low even among circles of foreign art collectors. Considering the unfavorable external conditions, above all the work's exclusion from the purchasing commissions in the museums, the preservation of the unofficial art was the mission of a number of private individuals. In this light it becomes understandable that many artists decided to give their works to the genuinely interested clientele as a gift. In many cases the commercial value was gauged too low—by both the purchaser and the seller—to adequately reflect the historical value of the artwork. The offer in return in its pecuniary form was no longer an issue, at least in the case of the important local collectors.[31]

The Moscow collector Leonid Talochkin (1936–2002) performed various functions for the unofficial artists beginning in the early 1960s. The "king of the scene" (*korol' tusovki*), as he was known, documented the artists' creative practice for over forty years; he photographed works, exhibitions, the artists as well as their audiences, and archived his comprehensive, rare material, which he handed over to the Russian State University of Humanities (RGGU) while he was still alive. From the beginning, Talochkin was committed to making the alternative movement accessible to a broader public. He participated in the conception and organization of several exhibitions, among them the "Bulldozer Exhibition" of 1974; published a great deal in *samizdat* and in official journals; and was co-editor of the comprehensive Russian catalogue *Drugoe iskusstvo* (Other Art), devoted to his collection, which accompanied exhibitions of the same name in the State Russian Museum, Leningrad, and the State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, in 1990–91 (Figs. 9, 10).[32]



Due to Talochkin's close collaboration with artists, he succeeded in forming a collection that contains about 2,000 works (including 600 paintings) and is considered the largest of its kind in Russia. It consists almost exclusively of gifts that are inextricably linked to the collector's biography ("My collection is my life, lived with artists"). For this reason, only those unofficial artists who were acquainted or friendly with Talochkin are represented.[33] Artists themselves chose the works they entrusted to him for his rapidly increasing holdings. Contrary to other collectors, the recipient kept everything. He exchanged and sold nothing, displaying everything on the walls of his modest apartment on Novoslobodskaia Street, which was located in the immediate vicinity of the Other Art Museum, founded at RGGU in 2000. The first entry in the catalogue of his holdings, a drawing by his long-time friend Boris Kozlov, dates to 1962, the year of the Manezh exhibition.

The multifaceted holdings of the collection (painting, graphic art, sculpture, objects) primarily reflect the development of unofficial art in Moscow from the 1950s until the late 1980s, when this art became part of the establishment in the wake of the historic Sotheby's auction of July 1988. Only a few Moscow artists are not featured, among them those—like Ilya Kabakov—who refused to donate their work.

In the beginning Talochkin, the son of a bookkeeper from northern Russia, considered his holdings merely a personal document and archive. It was only in February 1976 that he understood their cultural-political value, due to the imminent demolition of his apartment building. Talochkin was supposed to

Fig. 9
Smashed paintings from the "Bulldozer Exhibition," Moscow, September 15, 1974
Photographer unknown
Dodge Collection Archive.
PH00639

Fig. 10
Damaged painting by Lydia Masterkova after the "Bulldozer Exhibition," Moscow, September 15, 1974
Photographer unknown
Dodge Collection Archive.
PH00647

Fig. 11
Exhibition at the apartment of Georgii Mikhailov, Leningrad, 1979
Photograph by Alena
Dodge Collection Archive. PH00200

leave the city center for a tiny room in a new outlying area—a move that seemed to threaten the future of his collection, which then already consisted of over 500 items. At the request of artists the Ministry of Culture intervened on behalf of the collector, securing Talochkin a larger apartment in the area in which he was living; thus the Ministry—despite its mistrust of the minority art it perceived as elitist—facilitated the smooth relocation of the Talochkin collection, which was henceforth registered with the governmental body as a cultural monument of all-union significance.[34]

In retrospect, this was the first step taken toward the foundation of the Other Art Museum. With the end of dual cultural policy, unofficial art had lost its adversary; it would soon be regarded as a historical phenomenon. Parallel to the rehabilitation of his artistic companions during *perestroika,* Talochkin considered concrete measures to make his valuable property public. At first, he explored the possibility of donating his works to the Tretyakov Gallery; the negotiations did not come to fruition due to Talochkin's insistence that his collection be presented as a publicly accessible entity. Ultimately, he reached an agreement with RGGU, which since 2000 has housed the Other Art Museum in its main building at 15 Chaianov Street; the works are displayed in three rooms and three halls. Talochkin's bequest, which ensured that his collection would remain intact and be made accessible to the public, is unique among collections of unofficial art.[35] Other renowned collections, such as that assembled by Evgenii Nutovich, have been sold (at least in part), while much unofficial art remains in private hands. As far as public presentations of this material, the Russian Museum in St. Petersburg created a department for contemporary art trends, while the Tsaritsyno collection in Moscow organized an exhibition of a portion of its important holdings in 1999, holdings that are now housed and exhibited in the Tretyakov Gallery in its Krymskii Val location.

Repressions Against Collectors: The Case of Georgii Mikhailov

Talochkin was among those Soviet collectors who received the support of the authorities. Yet, many of his fellow collectors were forced to endure repression in various forms, ranging from lawsuits, arrest, and imprisonment (including

Fig. 12
Exhibition at the apartment of Georgii Mikhailov, Leningrad, 1979
Photograph by Alena
Dodge Collection Archive. PH00201

in the Gulag), to KGB surveillance, or, as in the case of George Costakis, arson, physical threats, even attempts on their lives. Collectors increasingly fled from such perilous conditions by emigrating to the West. George Costakis left for Greece—after time-consuming negotiations concerning the export of at least a small portion of his priceless holdings of avant-garde and nonconformist art. Alexander Glezer established himself, on the basis of his collection, first in France, later in New York. Together with foreign collectors, diplomats, and correspondents who acquired unofficial art in the USSR, these individuals were committed to popularizing nonconformist art in Western museums and galleries once in exile. For this reason, the emigrations of the 1970s did not impede the further development of the unofficial art movement. On the contrary: Those who were exiled were replaced, while those who left willingly acted as intermediaries between their former companions and the West.

The repressive measures used against the physics teacher Georgii Mikhailov by the Leningrad Party leadership should be mentioned in this context. The case illustrates that collectors came into conflict with the regime for political reasons; collecting served only as a pretext. Mikhailov, born in Leningrad in 1948, came into contact with the local alternative art scene in the early 1970s. Inspired by the events surrounding the Moscow "Bulldozer Exhibition" of September 1974, Mikhailov organized his first exhibition of artists he knew personally and, in many cases, was friends with, the following month. The show, held in his apartment at shosse Revoliutsii, 43, in the Krasnogvardeiskii district, strongly

resonated with nonconformist circles; soon thereafter, evening exhibits were held every Sunday at Mikhailov's home, which attracted more and more visitors.

At first, these cultural activities were untroubled by any government harassment (Figs. 11, 12). However, after some time, the Party began persecuting Mikhailov, who taught at an institute for highly gifted children at a local university. Under the direction of Grigorii Romanov, then Leningrad Party chief, who no longer wanted to tolerate the "wasp's nest"[36] in Mikhailov's apartment, the Party in 1978 decided to launch repressive measures against the collector while debating his fate at the Smolnyi Institute. In concert with the KGB and the *militsiia*, the local Party organization began constructing the Mikhailov case as a precedent just as Mikhailov was preparing to organize a solo exhibition of the artist Mikhail Chemiakin, who had sent lithographs from his Paris exile. As exhibitions organized in private did not constitute a breach of Soviet law, the "organs" at first attempted to threaten and provoke Mikhailov. Disguised as friends and like-minded companions of the collector, the notorious "art historians in plain clothes"—in reality, agents on the KGB payroll—made their way into Mikhailov's apartment. From this point on, these agents repeatedly "arranged" meetings for Mikhailov with foreigners who tried to buy contemporary art for hard currency. At other times, he was put into contact with dealers who offered him extremely high prices for his holdings. As trade in foreign currency and inflated price demands, or "speculation," were considered criminal offenses, Mikhailov's suspicions were aroused following a series of such incidents. Fearing legal repercussions, he even began to reject donations from his artist-friends.[37]

Mikhailov's mistrust was justified. In February 1979 the collector—who had been a member of the human rights organization Amnesty International since 1975—was arrested, and given a harsh sentence in September of that year. Charging the defendant with the preparation of an unlawful sale of photographs, the possession of slides of paintings of unofficial artworks, and engaging in art speculation, the court sentenced Mikhailov to four years of hard labor at a camp in Kolyma, in northeastern Siberia. The court also ordered the destruction of all 363 paintings seized at the Mikhailov apartment. Responding to pressure from the local community, which was sympathetic to Mikhailov, the court modified the latter part of its verdict. Nevertheless, the 70 most valuable works of Mikhailov's collection, along with more than 5,000 slides documenting the history of the unofficial Leningrad art scene of the 1970s, disappeared; any attempts thus far to recover these items have been unsuccessful.

Following Mikhailov's release from the camp, in February 1983, he again came into conflict with the authorities. He was re-arrested in September 1985, and sentenced to six years of incarceration in a camp of the harshest regime. Thanks to the French President François Mitterand's personal intervention with Gorbachev, Mikhailov was released early, in October 1986.

Mikhailov resumed his involvement with the local art scene immediately thereafter. By that point his holdings totalled some 900 paintings, which on the one hand were his own personal property, and on the other constituted the property of artists who had entrusted their works to their mentor. At first, the same government that for years had persecuted him now permitted him to take his collection to the West.[38] As had been the case earlier with Glezer and Costakis, Mikhailov had the opportunity to acquaint Western audiences with the unofficial art movement, an opportunity he amply exploited. In addition to popularizing his collection, he took steps to receive compensation for his property confiscated during the legal proceedings in 1979. For a time, his single-handed efforts to obtain compensation and achieve rehabilitation were unsuccessful. Mikhailov was ultimately rehabilitated in 1989, but his attempts to receive compensation improved only when he entered into cooperation with the newly established *glasnost* commission of the Leningrad City Soviet following the coup of August 1991. A joint task force composed of members of the *glasnost* commission and the KGB, which had in the meantime been reconstituted and renamed the FSB (Federal Security Service), achieved some initial concessions from the FSB. At a meeting between Mikhailov and the new head of the St. Petersburg branch of the FSB, General Sergei Stepashin, at the FSB headquarters on Liteinyi prospekt in May 1992, Stepashin acknowledged wrongdoing on the part of the KGB and admitted that the agency did not act correctly in the Mikhailov case. Stepashin, who had earlier supervised the state commission investigation into KGB activities, now promised publicly to restore the human rights violated in the Mikhailov case "within our competences."[39]

As a result, the St. Petersburg City Administration granted Mikhailov generous exhibition space at almost no cost as part of its real estate at Liteinyi prospekt, 53—in the immediate vicinity of the FSB headquarters, interestingly enough. In October 1996 the collector opened the First St. Petersburg Museum of Private Collections in this very centrally located building, which, on two levels and in a large space of 614 square meters, documented the development and range of a lively art scene beyond the official Party canon. Mikhailov's collection, made public, represents an important forum for Leningrad unofficial art, which—in contrast to its Moscow counterpart—is hardly known abroad, much less in the former USSR.[40]

1988 and After: The Sotheby's Auction and the New Appreciation of Nonconformist Art

As described above, nonconformist art was not included in the international art market prior to the epochal political changes that occurred in the Soviet Union in the late 1980s. Only with the proclamation of *perestroika* was the Soviet Ministry of Culture willing to integrate styles and works that for decades were disregarded or considered critical, taboo, or even subversive into the official cultural sphere. Movements and art forms that had long been erased from the nation's collective memory—the avant-garde, icon painting, and unofficial art—were retrieved and reconstructed in a new context. This new orientation was reflected in exhibition policies as well as the book market. The West reacted quickly to these developments.

One of the Soviet government's most significant concessions in this regard was the now-legendary Sotheby's art auction held in Moscow in 1988. For the first time since the October Revolution, the commercial aspect of art was at the forefront. What had been degraded for decades, often dismissed as "formalistic," "rubbish," "waste," or simply "foolishness," was judged by an international audience, estimated and newly assessed. The assessment far surpassed anyone's expectations—in the West, and, even more so, in the East.

The unexpectedly large sums of money the artworks garnered at the auction—way beyond the starting price, in most cases—has been attributed to the political content of the works auctioned off: avant-garde and unofficial art, both of which had been held in high esteem internationally, the former to a greater extent than

the latter. As sales to a Western clientele had previously taken place only on occasion, they influenced the economic value of nonconformism as a movement just marginally. At the Sotheby's auction this art, with its high symbolic value, received significant and lasting response from the emerging market.

The Russian department of the British-based auction house had initiated the first-ever international art auction held on Soviet soil. Lord Gowri, President of Sotheby's Great Britain and previously British Minister of Cultural Affairs, negotiated the event with Vasilii Zakharov, Soviet Minister of Cultural Affairs. The original idea came from Simon de Pury, Operating Manager of Sotheby's Europe, who as curator of the Thyssen-Bornemisza Foundation had visited the studios of Ilya Kabakov and other unofficial artists in Moscow and come to appreciate their art. The latter dominated the selection chosen by Gowri, de Pury, and Julian Barran, Managing Director of Sotheby's France. The historic sale comprised eighteen works by five renowned avant-garde artists (all privately owned) and a total of 100 works by twenty-nine contemporary artists, mostly of Moscow provenance and almost all that should be classified as unofficial.[41]

The pioneering auction began at the Moscow Sovintsentr on the evening of Thursday, July 7, 1988, in the presence of some 2,000 people from the USSR and abroad.[42] Preceded by long-term preparations, the auction was the culmination of a series of events that took place over the course of several weeks, among them showings of selected lots at Sotheby's premises in New York, London, Paris, Cologne, Zurich, and, finally, at the Sovintsentr. Sotheby's also organized exclusive package tours to Moscow for potential clients, one from London and one from New York; the tours included visits to museums, galleries, artists' studios, and churches, along with other excursions, lectures, and receptions. Sotheby's also guaranteed the free export of acquisitions from the Soviet Union.

The auction, conducted by de Pury and carried out in British currency, was a resounding success. The works fetched record amounts that far surpassed the starting prices; the overall revenues amounted to £2,085,050. The most expensive lot was an avant-garde work, Aleksandr Rodchenko's *Line*, which was sold to the London gallery Annely Juda for £330,000.[43]

The second highest price reached at the auction was for *Fundamental Lexicon* (1986), a monumental thirty-two-panel oil painting by the artist Grisha Bruskin. *Fundamental Lexicon*—not incidentally featured on the cover of the auction catalogue—fetched £242,000 ($415,756), far beyond its starting price of £14,000–18,000. Bruskin, a conceptual artist, was the undisputed star of the auction with the astounding success of *Fundamental Lexicon* as well as other works of his that were auctioned off—an amalgam of religious set pieces, conventional quotations, and characteristic types lacking individuality. Two other works by Bruskin ranked fourth and fifth in the top ten items sold at the auction; the artist's series *Alphabet* (nos. 3 and 4) yielded £93,000 (instead of the £10,000–12,000 estimated), while no. 5 from the same series went for £82,000 pounds (way beyond the starting price of £6,000–8,000).

Bruskin was by no means the only artist to enjoy such a windfall at the Sotheby's auction. Many works by his fellow unofficial artists went for prices that likewise far surpassed expectations. The singer Elton John purchased Svetlana Kopystiansky's *Landscape*—a work that had a starting price of £2,000–2,500— for £44,000 pounds; he also acquired *Restored Painting No. 5,* by her husband, Igor Kopystiansky, for the same amount. Ilya Kabakov's *Answers of an Experimental Group* yielded £22,000. The fate of this work, acquired privately by A. Alfred Taubman (who had bought Sotheby's five years earlier as a "white knight"), illustrates the political significance of the auction; like other lots at the auction, including those acquired by André Schoeller from Drouot, Paris, it was donated to a future museum of contemporary art in the USSR.

The success of the Sotheby's auction reflected the fundamental transformation of values that occurred within a very brief period. The sale indicated the existence of a sizeable demand for hitherto little-regarded or tabooed movements. It also showed that this demand increased in a manner analogous to the amount of invested capital. Both the starting prices and, even more so, the auction results, visibly reflected the increase in value, highlighting the significance of the former dissident art—which now left Soviet official art in its wake—vis-à-vis the Soviet public. The introduction of a market economy in many ways meant a clear break; with the end of ideological censorship and the abrupt end of the bipolar art world, it also enabled the creation of a reference system that could help orient the emerging art market. With the Sotheby's auction, nonconformism practically overnight established itself as the dominant contemporary art form; henceforth, it served to represent the Soviet Union abroad. In the aftermath of its unprecedented, upgraded appreciation, the so-called state artists not long ago courted by the Party experienced a drastic devaluation; the once official sphere imploded.

The post-Soviet art and collectors' market has undergone profound changes since the reforms initiated by Gorbachev. Ever since Lenin outlawed private property (and, consequently, private art collecting), collecting was the domain of the intelligentsia. When private property was partially rehabilitated during *perestroika* the first concessions were made to the previously criminalized subculture of collectors; their immense contribution to Russian and Soviet culture in rescuing those segments of art history long disregarded by the official historical memory was recognized. In addition, donations that had been kept in storage were now officially acknowledged, exhibited, publicized, and made publicly accessible at museums and galleries.[44] With the Sotheby's auction, and especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, art generally came to be seen as a commercial commodity and, among the emerging corporate elite, as an excellent investment. Financial capital, which during the Soviet era had been of minor relevance, became an essential prerequisite for art patronage. Corporate patronage rapidly replaced the diminishing ranks of private collectors; corporations started their own collections, began to act as sponsors and patrons, and launched galleries and museums. The "new Russians" conquered (and continue to conquer) territory once reserved for the nobility and the bourgeoisie that is ideally suited to the pursuit of commercial and legitimizing interests alike.

The drastic decline of the role of "cultural capital" reflects the transformation of the collector in the post-Soviet era." The prototypical Soviet collector was a learned scholar or esteemed artist who used his cultural expertise, contacts within the cultural bureaucracy, the Party, and the black market, as well as ample free time—the last a true asset in the Socialist system—to form his (rarely her) collection; in the early 1990s this type ceased to exist. The Yeltsin era ushered in a new form of art collector, the sponsor or patron, who capitalized almost exclusively on his financial clout. The quintessential Soviet collector could not keep up with the latest trends—rising prices for both international and domestic art that increasingly matched those on the Western market. Many of these collectors sold their holdings; some worked as curators

for new collectors, banks, and firms; many others left for abroad; still others used their collections as the basis for galleries, museums, or auction houses.[45] Art collecting—once synonymous with cultural capital and intellectual know-how—now moved into the realm of economic capital.

In the wake of these fundamental changes, nonconformist art collecting based on donations and cheap acquisitions came to an abrupt end. With the new appreciation and rehabilitation of the former unofficial art, the art market witnessed record price increases within no time. Many Soviet collectors, as mentioned, sold their holdings, either to the new corporations or institutions, at home as well as abroad. This was true both in general, as well as of nonconformist art collectors in particular; the Lithuanian collector Visvaldas Neniškis sold many works to Norton Dodge; Matti Milius reached an agreement with the Estonian Cultural Ministry, which acquired a considerable portion of his vast holdings and is negotiating for the remaining artworks, currently held in the Tartu Art Museum. As mentioned earlier, Sviatoslav Richter donated his collection to the Moscow Museum of Private Collections, while Leonid Talochkin's went to RGGU. Many of Evgenii Nutovich's holdings have been sold.

Despite record prices and the continually rising sales of Russian art abroad, dissident art was in less demand during much of the Yeltsin and early Putin eras than in the years immediately following the 1988 Sotheby's auction and the events of 1989/91; those involved in sales of this work even reported severe losses during the later period. In 1988, unofficial art—not least because of its political implications—traded for sensational prices; in contrast, in 2001 Sotheby's reported that works by Anatolii Zverev remained unsold, while lots by Leonid Purygin and Oscar Rabin fetched at most around $5,000. Yet most recently the tide has turned again; the nonconformist artworks featured in the May 2006 auction of Sotheby's London sold for well above the estimates, while the Sotheby's sale of unofficial art held in New York in April 2008 netted close to $5,000,000.[46] And in the last few years many an entrepreneur in Russia has turned to collecting the once unofficial art, as seen, for example, in the establishment of the Ekaterina Cultural Foundation and, most recently, the museum ART4.ru, founded by Igor Markin in June 2007.

With the former Soviet collectors of nonconformist art being replaced by a new breed of collectors who greatly differ from their predecessors and do not share the philosophy of the artists represented in their prestigious new settings, the institutionalized holdings of Norton T. and Nancy Dodge still provides this link to the past. It represents a much-needed forum for art-historical and museum studies, allowing for academic exchange, research, and a growing exhibition and publishing program. It offers a rare opportunity to study, analyze, and comprehend nonconformism as a heterogeneous movement, along with the many individual artists represented therein. With the increasing empirical documentation of the unofficial art movement by the staff of the Russian Department at the Zimmerli (as well as scholars the world over), much has been learned about the interrelationship of the former Soviet system, the semi-official patronage of leading Soviet collectors, and the patronage of numerous foreign collectors, in addition to the specifics and characteristic structures of the unofficial art market partly tolerated by the regime within the USSR. If anything remains to be added to enhance our knowledge of the motives behind the collecting of Soviet unofficial art, it would be a greater theoretical framework (Baudrillard, Bourdieu, Assmann) and its application to this art.

All translations are by the author unless otherwise noted.

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1 On the decree of October 5, 1918, see *Dekrety sovetskoi vlasti*, vol. 3 (Moscow, 1964), 399–400. The nationalization of art property is addressed in detail and with a list of numerous Russian and non-Russian sources in Waltraud Bayer, *Revolutionäre Beute: Von der Enteignung zum Verkauf,* in idem, ed., *Verkaufte Kultur: Sowjetische Kunst- und Antiquitätenexporte,* 1919–1938 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2001), 19–40; see pp. 22–23 for the October 5, 1918, decree and p. 28 for subsequent decrees.

2 These quotes come from Benois's diary: "Iz dnevnika A. N. Benois (1923 g.)," *Otechestvennye arkhivy* 5 (2001): 66. I am indebted to Elena Solomakha at the State Hermitage Museum for this information.

3 See, for instance, the application submitted by the engineer V. N. Arnshtein in the archive of the Hermitage, GE: f. 4, op. 1, d. 1464.

4 On the criticism of collectors during the NEP era see the wonderfully eccentric novels by Konstantin Vaginov, a writer and manic collector who in the 1920s was associated with the group of absurdist authors known as Oberiu (Association of Real Art). Anthony Anemone, "Obsessive Collectors: Fetishizing Culture in the Novels of Konstantin Vaginov," *Russian Review* 4 (2000): 252–68.

5 On the state's system of monopolized patronage, see Waltraud Bayer, "Versorgt, vereinnahmt, und zensiert: Sowjetische 'Kunst-Arbeiter' im Dienst der Partei," *Kritische Berichte* 4 (2003): 48–61.

6 Elena Kornetchuk, "Soviet Art under Government Control: From the 1917 Revolution to Khrushchev's Thaw," in Alla Rosenfeld and Norton T. Dodge, eds., *From Gulag to Glasnost: Nonconformist Art from the Soviet Union* (New York: Thames and Hudson in association with the Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, 1995), 47.

7 Ibid., 44.

8 Ibid., 47.

9 Michael Scammell, "Art as Politics and Politics in Art," in Rosenfeld and Dodge, eds., *From Gulag to Glasnost*, 49–63.

10 Kornetchuk, "Soviet Art under Government Control," 47.

11 Scammell, "Art as Politics and Politics in Art," 49.

12 Ibid., 50.

13 Ibid.

14 On the controversy surrounding the Manezh exhibition and the backlash that occurred in its aftermath see Susan E. Reid, "In the Name of the People: The Manège Affair Revisited," *Kritika* 6, no. 4 (Fall 2005): 673–716; Vladimir Yankilevsky, "Memoirs of the Manezh Exhibition, 1962," *Zimmerli Journal* 1, part 1 (Fall 2003): 67–77.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid., 49.

17 Ibid., 52. On the Richter collection see *Muzei lichnykh kollektsii: Putevoditel' po zalam muzeia* (Moscow: Khudozhnik i kniga, 2004), 73–80. On the Nutovich collection, which was exhibited at the Moscow Museum of Private Collections in 1997, see Fedor Romer, " 'Drugoe iskussvo' na vzgliad sovremennika," *Itogi* (July 29, 1997): 82–3. On Dudakov, see Peter Sager, *Die Besessenen: Begegnungen mit Kunstsammlern zwischen Aachen und Tokio* (Cologne: DuMont, 1992), 53–66. On Costakis: Waltraud Bayer, "Die Sammlung Costakis," *Osteuropa* 12 (1996): 1215–27. On Glezer: Alexander Gleser, *Kunst gegen Bulldozer: Memoiren eines russischen Sammlers* (Frankfurt am Main: Ullstein Verlag, 1982).

18 After Glezer's show was closed down, a Party decree was passed in 1967 specifying that future exhibitions in Moscow would have to be approved by the local branch of the Artists' Union. Scammell, "Art as Politics and Politics in Art," 53.

19 All quotes in this paragraph come from ibid., 52. For further information on the repressions and the legendary "Bulldozer Exhibition," at which pictures were mutilated and burnt by a KGB-started fire, see ibid., 52–4.

[20] Ibid., 55.

[21] The exhibition was titled *Russian and Soviet Painting* (1977).

[22] All quotes in this paragraph come from Scammell, "Art as Politics and Politics in Art," 55. On the émigré artists, see pp. 55–6. Mikhail Chemiakin left, as did Komar and Melamid, for New York; Ernst Neizvestny resettled in Sweden and, later, the United States; many others chose Paris (Oscar and Alexander Rabin, Valentina Kropivnitskaia, Oleg Tselkov) or London (Lydia Masterkova, Igor Kholin, Oleg Prokofiev).

[23] Boris Groys, *Zeitgenössische Kunst aus Moskau: Von der Neo-Avantgarde zum Post-Stalinismus* (Munich: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1991), 57.

[24] On this, see Hans-Peter Riese, ed., *Nonkonformisten: Die zweite russische Avantgarde, 1955–1988; Sammlung Bar-Gera* (Cologne: Wienand Verlag 1996); idem, *Das rote Haus: Zeitgenössische russische Kunst aus der Sammlung Bierfreund* (Bietingheim-Bissingen: Wienand Verlag, 2000); and Martin Kunz, ed., *Von der Revolution zur Perestroika: Sowjetische Kunst aus der Sammlung Ludwig* (Stuttgart: Gerd Hatje, 1989).

[25] Dr. Norton T. Dodge, "Notes on Collecting Nonconformist Soviet Art in the 1960's and 70's and Beyond" (nineteen-page typescript), archive of the author.

[26] The Dodge Collection is worldwide the best documented collection of unofficial art. In particular, see the following comprehensive catalogues: Rosenfeld and Dodge, eds., *From Gulag to Glasnost*; and Alla Rosenfeld and Norton T. Dodge, eds., *Art of the Baltics: The Struggle for Freedom of Artistic Expression under the Soviets, 1945–1991* (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press and the Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, 2002).

[27] On the repression of collectors during the Brezhnev era see Waltraud Bayer, *Gerettete Kultur: Private Kunstsammler in der Sowjetunion, 1917–1991* (Vienna: Turia + Kant, 2006), 273–91. In March 1979 the Soviet government issued a law regulating private art property—the first such law since the Lenin decrees of 1918 and those that followed; private art property was permitted only, as in 1918, on the basis of special permits. See ibid., 282–84.

[28] Quoted in Sager, *Die Besessenen*, 66.

[29] An article on the Kolodzei collection by the author will appear in a conference volume in 2008: Waltraud Bayer, *Engagement für Dissens: Die Sammlerin Tatiana Kolodzei* (Berlin: Reimer Verlag).

[30] On Brei see Waltraud Bayer, "Ukrainische Kunst etabliert sich international: Ihr Förderer Alexander Brei," *Parnass* 1 (2003): 14–18. On Lepp and Milius see Waltraud Bayer, "Vom Underground ins Museum: Estnische Kunstsammler in der UdSSR," *Osteuropa* 8 (2002): 1063–74.

[31] Hartmut Winkler, *Diskursökonomie: Versuch über die innere Ökonomie der Medien* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004), 50ff; see especially 62, 64.

[32] L. P. Talochkin and I. G. Alpatova, eds., *"Drugoe iskusstvo": Moskva, 1956–1976*, vols. I and II (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia galereia "Moskovskaia kollektsia," 1991).

[33] Yuliia Lebedeva-Gretskaia, "L. P. Talochkin: Portrety iz kollektsii muzeia 'Drugoe iskusstvo,' " http://museum.rsuh.ru/: Arkhiv 2002, 1–2; the information cited here comes from p. 1; Talochkin, as quoted in Yuliia Lebedeva-Gretskaia, "Muzei," http://other-art.rsuh.ru/, 1. The Talochkin collection mainly represents the Moscow art scene. The conceptual artists Rimma and Valeriy Gerlovin are featured, as are members of the Lianozovo group—Oscar Rabin; Evgenii, Valentina, and Lev Kropivnitsky; Lydia Masterkova; Vladimir Nemukhin; and Nikolai Vechtomov. Also included are the internationally renowned artists Dmitrii Krasnopevtsev, Vladimir Veisberg, Anatolii Zverev, Dmitrii Plavinsky, Nikita Alekseev, Francisco Infante, Ülo Sooster, and Ernst Neizvestny, as well as some of the participants in the "Bulldozer Exhibition," among them Sergei Bordachev, Boris Borukh, Yurii Zharkikh, and Evgenii Rukhin. Only one work from the Bulldozer show entered the collection: Zharkikh's *Birth* (1972). Zharkikh and Rukhin are among the few Leningrad artists featured in Talochkin's holdings.

[34] Lebedeva-Gretskaia, "Muzei," 2.

[35] The Other Art Museum is currently part of the RGGU Museum Center, operated by GMII, the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts. Interview by the author with Yuliia Lebedeva-Gretskaia, RGGU, July, 13, 2004.

[36] Quoted in Waltraud Bayer, "Gegen alle Widerstände: Ein neues Museum in Petersburg," *Osteuropa* 5 (1997): 470.

[37] Among those artist-friends was Alexander Isachev. For legal reasons Mikhailov established the Alexander Isachev Fund in 1979; the fund was later renamed several times and enlarged. According to the fund's statutes, Mikhailov was in charge of organizing materials and promoting the work of the artist Alexander Isachev, who in turn entrusted his oeuvre to the fund for conservation.

[38] For many years Mikhailov divided his time between Russia and the West, and was made an honorary citizen of Lyon in 1987. He had a French wife (or companion), and, later, a German partner. Since the 1990s he has spent a great deal of time in Germany, particularly Munich.

[39] Elena Druzhinina, "General Stepashin—Georgii Mikhailov: Davai pozhmem drug drugu ruki," *Vechernii Peterburg* (June 1, 1992): 1.

[40] My discussion of Mikhailov in this essay, a shorter version of the article cited in note 36, is based on my interview with the collector, conducted in St. Petersburg on September 11, 1996, as well as on research performed in the Mikhailov Archive. As of March 2008, the fate of the Mikhailov collection is not clear. In the latter part of 2007 the gallery was closed down, as the rent had been raised tenfold by KUGI, the committee in charge of city property. In late 2006 the governor of St. Petersburg, Valentina Matvienko, was trying to negotiate, and even considered endorsing, the opening of a museum of contemporary art on the basis of the Mikhailov collection. Her efforts have thus far been unsuccessful. On the Leningrad nonconformist movement see Alla Rosenfeld, " 'A Great City with a Provincial Fate': Nonconformist Art in Leningrad from Khrushchev's Thaw to Gorbachev's *Perestroika*," in Rosenfeld and Dodge, eds., *From Gulag to Glasnost*, 101–34.

[41] In the introduction of the catalogue, published jointly by Sotheby's and the Soviet Ministry of Culture, it is expressly noted that the dualism characteristic of post-war Soviet art came to an end with the proclamation of glasnost.

[42] *Sotheby's: Russian Avant-Garde and Soviet Contemporary Art; Moscow, July 7, 1988* (London, 1988). The catalogue was published in English and Russian. Fiona Ford, "Sotheby's Sale in Moscow in July" (Sotheby's press release; London, 1988), 1–3, in Sotheby's Archive, Press Department, London.

[43] In London only a year earlier (April 1987), a work by Rodchenko went for the highest price the artist ever reached at a Sotheby's auction: about £130,000.

[44] On the rehabilitation of art collecting see the comprehensive account on the founding of the Collectors' Club, the Collectors' Union, and the Moscow Museum of Private Collections, as well as the legal concessions to formerly repressed collectors, in Bayer, *Gerettete Kultur*, 293–315.

[45] On the changes in collectors and collecting after 1988/91 see Bayer, *Gerettete Kultur*, 313–15. On those who used their collections as the basis for galleries or other enterprises see the biographical entries on Edvardas Armoška, Brei, Dudakov, Mikhail Knobel, Yuri Koshkin, Milius, Mikhailov, Neniškis, Mikhail Perchenko, and Yuri Veitsman in ibid., 348, 351, 353, 356, 358, 360, 361, 364, 370ff.

[46] On the recent "Russian" auctions and the high prices, most notably for Russian modern and avant-garde art, see the survey in Waltraud Bayer, "Russische Bestseller: Der internationale Kunstmarkt als Indikator für die Wertschätzung von russischer Kunst seit 1988," in Ada Raev and Isabel Wünsche, eds., *Kursschwankungen: Russische Kunst im Wertesystem der europäischen Moderne* (Berlin: Lukas Verlag, 2007), 43–54.