Soviet-American Art Exchanges during the Thaw: from Bold Openings to Hasty Retreats


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[Introduction] East-West artistic connections during the Cold War were a complex range of phenomena including the circulation of works of art, travelling by art professionals, the exchange of practices and the adoption of art currents from the other side of the Iron Curtain. The Cold War has also been said to have influenced the arts and artistic processes in a number of ways. Yet, art has always shunned political borders, wavering between the guidance of individual and governmental patrons, and borderless expression. This chapter discusses an attempt at an extensive exchange of exhibitions between the Soviet Union and the United States around the late 1950s that involved New York’s Museum of Modern Art, the Pushkin Art Museum from Moscow and many other leading art institutions. It illustrates the prospects of fine art in expanding the horizons of people, while at the same time it manifests the strict limitations that political players on both sides managed to impose on the ...
She also details how individual interests intersected with official objectives for Soviet society during the Thaw, a period characterized by both liberalization and vigilance in everyday life. Set against the backdrop of the widespread transition from communal to one-family living, Stories of House and Home explores the daily experiences and aspirations of Soviet citizens who were granted new apartments and those who continued to inhabit the old housing stock due to the chronic problems that beset the housing program. Mass tourism became a 44 Caute, for one, records the gradually waning development from 1963 onwards, Caute, Dancer Defects, 30–32; also, Vladislav Zubok, Zhivago's Children: The Last Russian Intelligentsia (Oxford: Harvard University Press, 2009), 193–225; Mikkonen, Simo, "Soviet-American Art Exchanges during the Thaw: from Bold Openings to Hasty Retreats", Sirje Helme (ed) Art and Political Reality, Proceedings of the. Art Museum of Estonia. With this Soviet opening of borders, the role the Finnish-Soviet Society started to change, and it began to develop into the cultural organization it had claimed to be from the start.