



Tchoban Foundation  
Museum für  
Architekturzeichnung

**Press release  
Berlin, 02.09.2013**

## **Exhibition Opening in the Museum for Architectural Drawing**

**ARCHITECTURE IN CULTURAL STRIFE:  
*Russian and Soviet Architecture in Drawings, 1900-1953***

**Venue: Tchoban Foundation. Museum for Architectural Drawing**

**Address: Christinenstraße 18a, 10119 Berlin**

**Duration: 21.09.2013–14.02.2014**

**Opening Times: Mo–Fr 14:00–19:00, Sa 13:00–17:00**

**Entrance: 5,00 Euro, reduction 3,00 Euro**

**The exhibition has been assembled from the collection of the Tchoban Foundation in its own home at Pfefferberg, and illustrates the ideological and artistic divide between Neoclassicists and Constructivists, the two main architectural currents in Russia, later the Soviet Union, from the turn of the last century up until Stalin's death. Examples of key drawings shed light on the tension that existed between tradition and innovation, art and technology, history and the visionary - and not least the cultural competition between the two cities, St. Petersburg/ Leningrad and Moscow.**



## Cultural Strife – Fighting for Culture

Russian architecture has long been influenced by European models: parts of the Kremlin were built by Italian Renaissance architects, Classicism was imported from Europe as of the 17th. Century and Russian Modernism was influenced by Art Nouveau. The Neoclassicism which followed, however, was not just a Russian version of a western idiom: it was an independent style developed by architects from St. Petersburg from ideas and images of national Russian identity. In a decadent age, it seemed that culture was regressing: the Neoclassicists sought to defend high classical culture. These architects studied classical order in Italy and transformed it into their own buildings in Russia. Their fear of a 'doomed' culture, of a possible exhaustion of the classical theme, is visible in their architecture. This moribund mood was expressed in architectural form and a particularly dramatic style of architectural drawing.

A younger generation of architects brought up in Moscow with the idea of the Revolution and renewal, posed a threat for Neoclassicism. Independent of one ideology, their quest was to revitalise architectural language or rather to invent a completely new language. Initially this took the form of Expressionism. The continuous experimentation in the search for new structures and the influence of Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius and the Italian Futurists led to the invention of a new, astonishing „label“; Constructivism. The architects of this new movement constructed their own forms, constructed each building as a totality, constructed forms for a new life. Here lay the architectonics of social experiment, a three-dimensional metaphor for the contemporary, a spatial analogy for the New Society.

The competition to design the Palace of the Soviets marked a turning point in the struggle for primacy between Neoclassicism and Constructivism. Stalin's vision for the true monument of the communist realm was of a tower – a new tower of Babel. This



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was satisfied by many of the Neoclassicist design entries. There were no towers, however, amongst the Constructivist entries and this is one of the reasons why these designs were rejected. The outcome of the battle had been decided. Neoclassicism, which embodied communist notions of culture and representation of great power, was to define the architectural style of the Soviet Union in the following years. The modern currents were marginalised to the edges of the cultural scene or at best formed a kind of synthesis similar to western Art déco.

### **The Exhibition**

The exhibited drawings from the collection of the Tchoban Foundation offer an impressive insight into the most important chapter of Russian architectural history. 79 drawings from 1900 to 1953 will be presented on two floors of the Museum for Architectural Drawings which recently opened in June 2013. Highlights include the Constructivist designs by Kirill Afansyev and Andrey Burov, drawings by the Neoclassicist, Boris Iofan, architectural fantasies by Yakov Chernikhov, projects by Noi Trotsky and Igor Fomin as well as designs for the Lenin Mausoleums by Alexey Shchusev.

### **Curators**

IRINA SEDOVA, Architectural historian, Curator, longstanding Restorer at the Shchusev Museum of Architecture



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### **Concept of the exhibition**

VLADIMIR SEDOV, Architectural historian, Professor at the Moscow Institute for Architecture, Author of numerous publications which include the history of Russian and Soviet architecture.

SERGEI TCHOBAN, Architect and Collector of architectural drawings, Founder and Member of the Board of Trustees of the Tchoban Foundation

To mark the exhibition, a detailed catalogue showing the development and currents in Russian respectively Soviet architecture from 1900 to 1953 has been published. It is available for purchase in the museum shop.

### **Contact:**

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In the case of publication, we kindly request a copy of the proof document.

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