

A Brief History of Obmokhu

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Studies of early Soviet art invariably devote a great deal of attention to the Society of Young Artists, or Obmokhu. The activity of its members proved an enabling factor in the emergence of Constructivism in the five years following the October Revolution, and the careers of many prominent artists traced their beginnings to Obmokhu. Yet, as scholars have noted, the history of Obmokhu has not been entirely clear; numerous questions have remained unanswered.

While researching the history of the First Free State Art Workshops, I have brought to light a number of circumstances and factual details which make it possible to strip away persistent inaccuracies in and distortions of the history of Obmokhu and to establish a more precise chronology and authentic account of the group's activity.

Both Soviet and Western scholars have relied above all on V. M. Lobanov's *Khudozhestvennye gruppировки за poslednie 25 let* (*Artists' Groups over the Last Twenty-Five Years*), published by AKhR (the Association of Artists of the Revolution) in 1930, for their information on Obmokhu. For Soviet art historians, Lobanov's slender volume was for many decades nearly the only comprehensive work treating the multiple facets of artistic life in the immediate postrevolutionary years. Because Lobanov was a participant in and witness to the events he described, subsequent generations attributed to his book all the merits of a primary source; Lobanov's information, because it was firsthand, seemed authoritative and trustworthy. As a result, no critical judgment was brought to bear on the book: Lobanov's facts were neither doubted nor checked, and his mistakes and inaccuracies were reproduced in the work of one writer after another—as they are even today. Yet one needn't look far to determine that the book does, indeed, contain errors of fact. Thus, for example, Lobanov insists—and more than once—that the Twenty-First State Exhibition, which opened in March 1921, was the last exhibition organized by Izo Narkompros (the Department of Fine Arts of the People's Commissariat of Enlightenment).¹ The truth, however, is that both the Twenty-Second State Exhibition (on which more below) and the Twenty-Third (the hardly obscure exhibition of Marc Chagall's murals for the State Jewish Kamernyi Theater in Moscow) were also organized by Izo Narkompros.²

Lobanov was the official historian of and apologist for AKhR, and his book is a product of its times: it is undisguisedly tendentious, a polemic bent on repudiation of Izo Narkompros. It was Lobanov's aim to demonstrate, on the one hand, the bankruptcy of Izo Narkompros's pluralistic policy and, on the other, the weakness and unviability of various "Formalist" tendencies and movements in postrevolutionary art. Singling out Obmokhu—whose chief significance lay, according to Lobanov, "not in the formulation or realization of this or that artistic slogan so much as in its being a pioneer in the creation of new artists' groupings based, unlike the eclectic Narkompros exhibitions, on a selection of artists united by a shared principle"³—and juxtaposing it to other artists' associations served Lobanov's strategy. AKhR aspired to power, and its ideologues saw a concentrated "strike force" of artists as the chief means of attaining it. Lobanov chose Obmokhu, so it appears, in order to demonstrate the efficacy of such a ploy. The "postscripts," inaccuracies, and deliberate suppression of certain facts of Obmokhu's history in Lobanov's book were dictated by this biased purpose.

In the summer of 1919, at the moment of highest tension in the Civil War, a general mobilization into the Red Army was announced, and many students of the former Stroganov School in Moscow, who had just finished their first year at the new First Free State Art Workshops, were sent to the front. One of those called up was Georgii Shchetinin, who had been among the most active reformers of artistic education "from below"; he



had done immense organizational work at the school over a number of years.⁴ At his departure, Shchetinin made a close friend pledge both to carry on his work at the First Free State Art Workshops and to write him regularly and in detail about everything that happened there. Shchetinin's friend was Georgii Echeistov, a student of Vladimir Favorskii's and later a well-known graphic artist, and he kept his promise to Shchetinin. Both young men were acutely aware that history was being made around them and through them, and they carefully preserved their notes, letters, and other papers. The 1919–21 correspondence between Echeistov and Shchetinin is invaluable, for it records events as they occurred and is marred by none of the distortions that afflict later reminiscences and memoirs.⁵

In a brief letter of September 15, 1919, Echeistov told Shchetinin, among other things: "A group 'without a supervisor' has formed out of Grigor'ev's workshop, and I'm in it. I'll work under G. Iakulov in a special workshop and learn about theater, and one can earn money with him." These lines require some elucidation: a reform introduced in the first months of the Soviet state had led to the creation of the experimental Svomas (Free Workshops), where a master-and-apprentice system, modeled on the utopian ideal of the Renaissance studio, was the basis of art education. The new professional schools in both Moscow and Petrograd were composed of individual workshops, in which classes were conducted by artists elected supervisors by the students. At the First Free State Art Workshops, created from the former Stroganov School, there were not only individual but special workshops, in which students of different classes could study; special workshops in stage and costume design were run by

fig. 1
The "workshop without a supervisor," First State Free Art Workshops, Moscow, 1920. From left, seated: Zharova, Kozlova, and Svetlov; standing: Prusakov, unidentified, Menshutin, Zhukov, Aleksandrov, I. Mistriuk, and Naumov.



fig. 2
Lentulov's workshop, First State Free Art Workshops, Moscow, 1920.
Standing, third from right, Komardenkov; center, Lentulov.

Aristarkh Lentulov, Fedor Fedorovskii, and Georgii Iakulov. Iakulov was highly regarded by the students, participated in many of their undertakings, and helped them to endure the hardships of those years. He put his workshop on an "economic" footing from its very first months: he paid wages for work, obtained commissions for his students, and so on.⁶ A portion of the students at the First Free State Art Workshops, in particular those who at the time of the Revolution had been in the Stroganov School's senior classes, were entitled to study exclusively in the special workshops.⁷

According to a report written by Shchetinin, there were eighteen workshops in all at the First Free State Art Workshops (twelve in painting, three in sculpture, and three in architecture).⁸ One of the painting workshops was headed by Boris Grigor'ev, who lived in Petrograd and made infrequent visits to Moscow (at the end of 1919, he and his family would leave Russia for good). At the beginning of the 1919–20 academic year, the students in Grigor'ev's workshop chose, for a number of reasons, to reject their teacher elected the year before and to form a group "without a supervisor," as was permitted under the provisional bylaws of the Free Workshops. In a draft autobiography, Echeistov later indicated: "At about this time my artistic credo begin to take shape under the influence of the Futurists (artists, painters, and poets). I didn't care for any of the Russian artists, I liked the French in Shchukin's gallery. So I joined up with Prusakov and Naumov, who had organized a workshop without a supervisor."

Aleksandr Naumov, a brilliantly gifted artist who died at an early age, and Nikolai Prusakov, who would become well known as a poster artist and designer, were among the school's most talented students, and had already received their basic professional training at the old Stroganov School. In 1919–20, Echeistov, Naumov, and Prusakov were joined in the "workshop without a supervisor" by Grigorii Aleksandrov, S. I. Egorov, Nikolai Glushkov, Klavdiia Kozlova, Nikolai Menshutin, Sergei Svetlov, Lidiia Zharova (who married Naumov in 1920), and Petr Zhukov (fig. no. 1). According to the testimony of Zharova-Naumova, Sergei Kostin and Mikhail Sapegin, among others, were frequent visitors to the workshop, where life drawing was well taught.⁹ Like Echeistov, certain of the students in the "workshop without a supervisor"—Aleksandrov, Menshutin, Sapegin, Svetlov, and Zhukov—continued to study in Iakulov's stage-design workshop.

The "workshop without a supervisor" remained in existence until the spring of 1920. A number of the students, particularly those who were already clear about where their artistic futures lay and those who were employed filling commissions, considered their educations at an end and were given certificates attesting to their having completed a course of higher education. In the Free Workshops, and initially at Vkhutemas (the Higher Artistic-Technical Workshops), there were no strict prerequisites for graduation—a student presented his work to the Council of Professors, and if the Council judged the work to be mature, the young artist was given a certificate of completion. (It is for this reason that the graduation dates of the Free Workshops' and Vkhutemas's first graduates vary so widely.¹⁰)

Over three days at the end of September 1919, Echeistov wrote a long letter (dated September 27–29) to Shchetinin, giving him the latest news:

What can I write "about art in Moscow"? It's tight. I'm counting on our workshops. As soon as I'm free (of his duties as secretary of the students' executive committee), what a journal I'll start (unless I get lazy). Still, my being secretary pays off—I've been in the thick of things. A society of young artists, Obmolkhud, is being organized. I wrote the bylaws. (I emended them today, they need reworking and

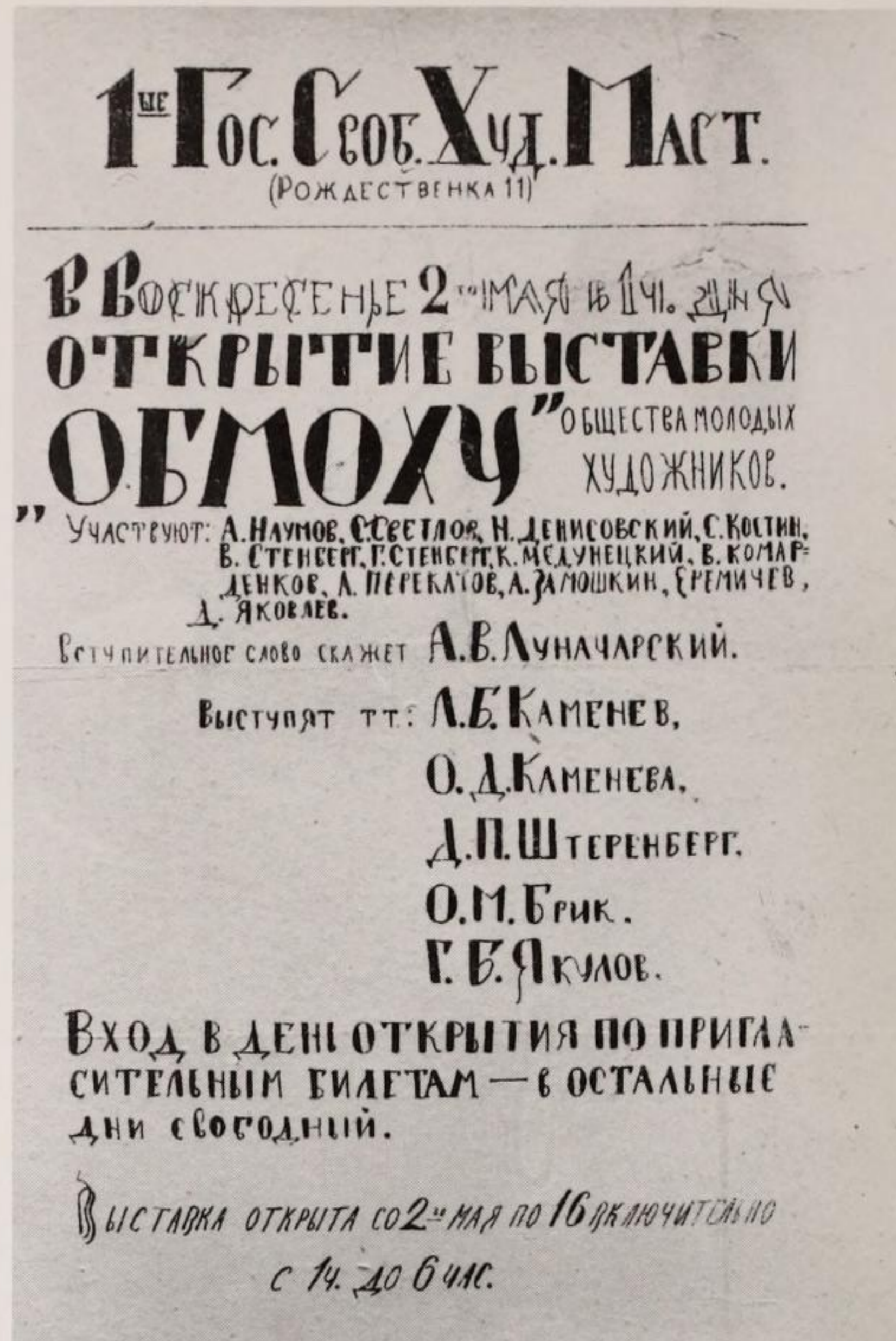


fig. 3
Poster for Obmolkhud exhibition, Moscow, May 2–16, 1920.
Collection N. D. Lobanov-Rostovsky.

polishing.) Sapegin, Naumov, Prusakov, Komardenkov, Kostin, and I—and, I can't remember, Stepanov and Denisovskii, too, I think—are the directors. We're organizing it to combat the artists in authority who exploit young talents (the Kostin-Grigor'ev incident and others)."

Echeistov's letter unambiguously attests that Obmolkhud, as Obmokhu was first called, began forming only in the autumn of 1919; the group could not, therefore, have held an exhibition in the spring of 1919, as Lobanov asserts. It should be noted that the young artists did not treat the organization of their society lightly but erected it on a carefully laid foundation; the group had bylaws,¹² elected directors (Nikolai Denisovskii, endowed with exceptional organizational skills, later became its president), and a seal.

All of the artists listed by Echeistov—with the exception of Sapegin, Aleksei Stepanov, and Echeistov himself—have been recognized by scholars as members of Obmokhu. The participation of both Sapegin—a student of Iakulov's and a future stage designer—and Stepanov—also a student of Iakulov's, who later worked at the State Jewish Kamernyi Theater—in the early stages of the organization of Obmokhu appears quite probable. As for Echeistov, a fire in the "workshop without a supervisor" in late 1919—early 1920 led him into a deep depression, and he stopped working. "The fire in our workshop," Echeistov wrote in his autobiography, "destroyed an enormous number of drawings completed over this time. It was a tremendous loss; I did almost nothing for the whole next year."¹³

With what exhibition of 1919 has the first Obmokhu exhibition been confused? At the end of the 1918–19 academic year at the First Free State Art Workshops, the new art school's first full year of operation, a showcase exhibition was held at the school's quarters at II Rozhdestvenka. At the exhibition, on view in June 1919, the works of students and teachers were displayed together, by workshop (the very organizing principle, that is, that Lobanov claims was Obmokhu's innovation). A large informative notice in the newspaper *Iskusstvo* (Art) is unambiguous on this point:

EXHIBITION OF WORKS OF THE STATE FREE ART WORKSHOPS

The first exhibition of more than one thousand works from the state industrial workshops closed on July 1st. The exhibition was divided up according to individual and decorative-and-production workshops. The workshops of the artists F. Fedorovskii, G. Iakulov, A. Lentulov, P. Konchalovskii, A. Morgunov, V. Tatlin, A. Grishchenko, B. Grigor'ev, Ul'ianov, the sculptor Vatagin, and others were represented.¹⁴

The author of the notice—in all likelihood Shchetinin, who published an extensive report on the First Free State Art Workshops' first year in the next issue of *Art*—emphasizes that "the exhibition itself was clearly organized as a decorative and production one. Still, the principle of revolutionizing everyday life is manifestly shared by the workshops of the artists G. B. Iakulov (very successful signboards for factories and public buildings), F. F. Fedorovskii (the maquettes for folk-dance performances were of interest), and, in part, A. V. Lentulov (stage-design maquettes) and by the students working out new types of posters, books, street and train decorations, and so forth." Lobanov's list of the kinds of work exhibited in what he calls the first Obmokhu exhibition, in the spring of 1919, matches the list in the notice.

The displaying of works by students and teachers as a single work of the entire workshop at the First State Free Art Workshops show, mistaken for the first Obmokhu exhibition, has caused Iakulov and Lentulov to be included among

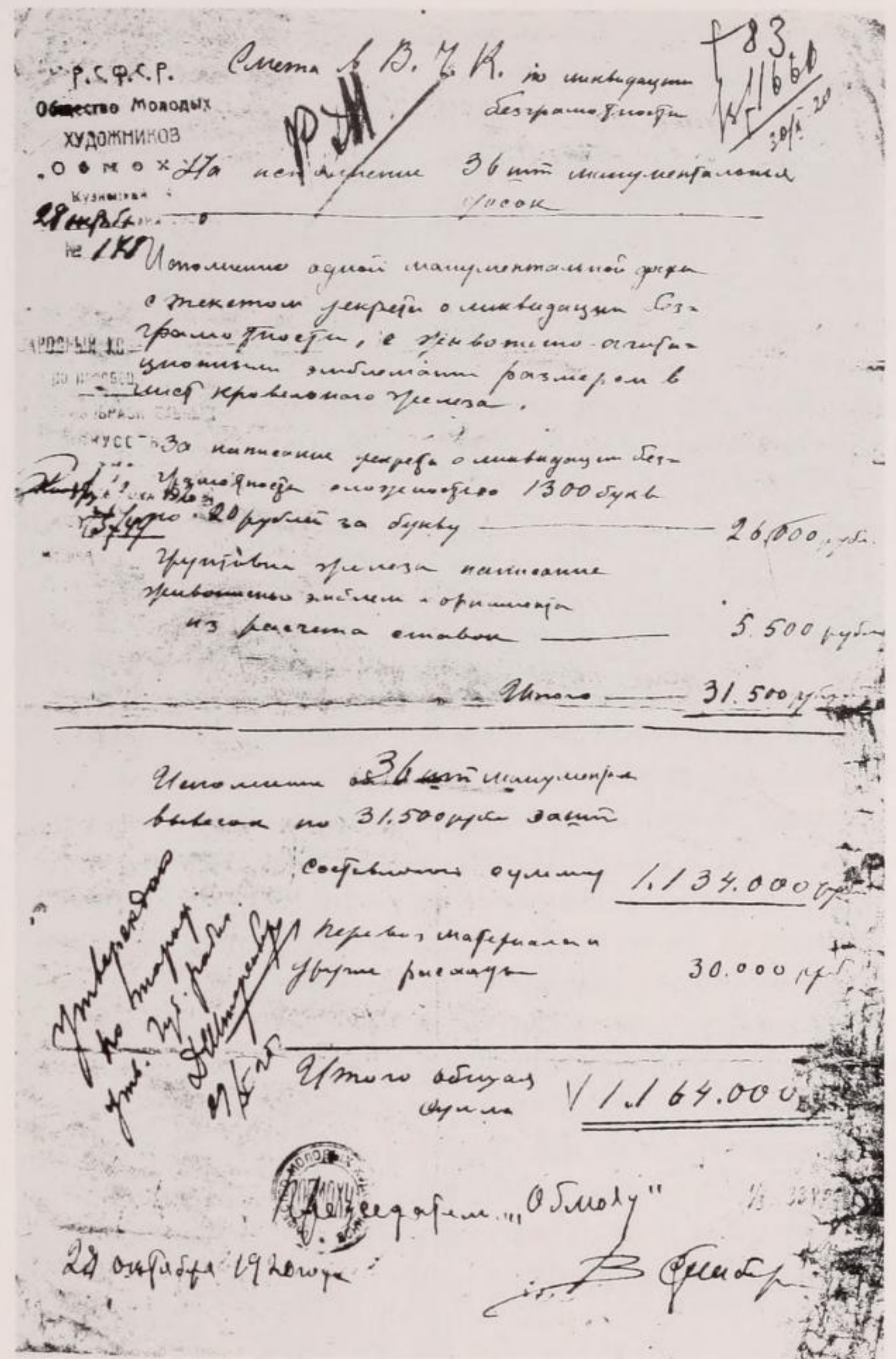


fig. 4 Invoice from Obmokhu to Narkompros, October 28, 1920. The document is stamped with two Obmokhu seals designed by Vladimir Stenberg. Central State Archive of Russia, Moscow.

Obmokhu's members. Yet, as will become clear below, Iakulov and Lentulov never participated in Obmokhu's exhibitions and cannot be counted as members of the group (as they are in numerous descriptions of Obmokhu and in articles and monographs on their work).

The "decorative and production" principle singled out in the description of the exhibited works—a principle that was to enable the "revolutionizing of everyday life"—is especially noteworthy. The introduction of "art into life"—the chief slogan of the future Productivists and Constructivists—was naturally bound to play a defining role in the educational program of the First Free State Art Workshops. But the evolution and instilling of new forms followed a turbulent, contentious course; Echeistov wrote in the September 27–29, 1919, letter cited above: "Tatlin is leaving for Petrograd for good, with tears in his eyes because he wasn't understood at the Stroganov; and he won't have anything to do with the Second Workshops [the Second State Free Art Workshops, created from the Moscow School of Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture], doesn't acknowledge them. He got a commission and is going."⁵ Open conflicts between the "purists" and Productivists would soon rattle artistic life, and the departure of the wounded Tatlin anticipates, as it were, the schism inside Inkhuk (the Institute of Artistic Culture)—though at Inkhuk, it would be the easel painters who would depart, leaving the field to the Productivists.

The principle of exhibiting by workshop adhered to at the 1919 showcase exhibition did shape the true first Obmokhu exhibition, which opened in May 1920 at the First Free State Art Workshops at 11 Rozhdestvenka. The poster announcing the exhibition (fig. no. 3) read:

*First State Free Art Workshops
(11 Rozhdestvenka)*

Sunday, May 2nd at 1 p.m. Opening of the Obmokhu (Society of Young Painters) exhibition.

Participants: A. Naumov, S. Svetlov, N. Denisovskii, S. Kostin, V. Stenberg, G. Stenberg, K. Medunetskii, V. Komardenkov, A. Perekatov, A. Zamoshkin, Eremichev, D. Iakovlev.

Opening remarks will be delivered by A. V. Lunacharskii.

*Speakers: Comrades L. B. Kamenev,
O. D. Kameneva,
D. P. Shterenberg,
O. M. Brik,
G. B. Iakulov.*

Admission on opening day is by invitation, and unrestricted on other days.

The exhibition will be open May 2–16, from 1–6 p.m.

The "workshop without a supervisor" and the "Iakulovists" and "Lentulovists" (not listed alphabetically but grouped by workshop on the poster) were represented at the exhibition. For a number of the students—including Georgii and Vladimir Stenberg, Vasilii Komardenkov, Aleksandr Zamoshkin, and Prusakov—the exhibition marked the occasion of their graduation. Sketches for festive decorations of streets and buildings and for the decoration of trains and ships, posters, designs for stage sets and costumes, and experimental works were on display.

The usefulness of such design work for various educational and propaganda undertakings of the Soviet state was obvious, and the leaders of Narkompros, headed by Anatolii Lunacharskii, decided to create an agit-production workshop from Obmokhu. Space for the workshop was found in the

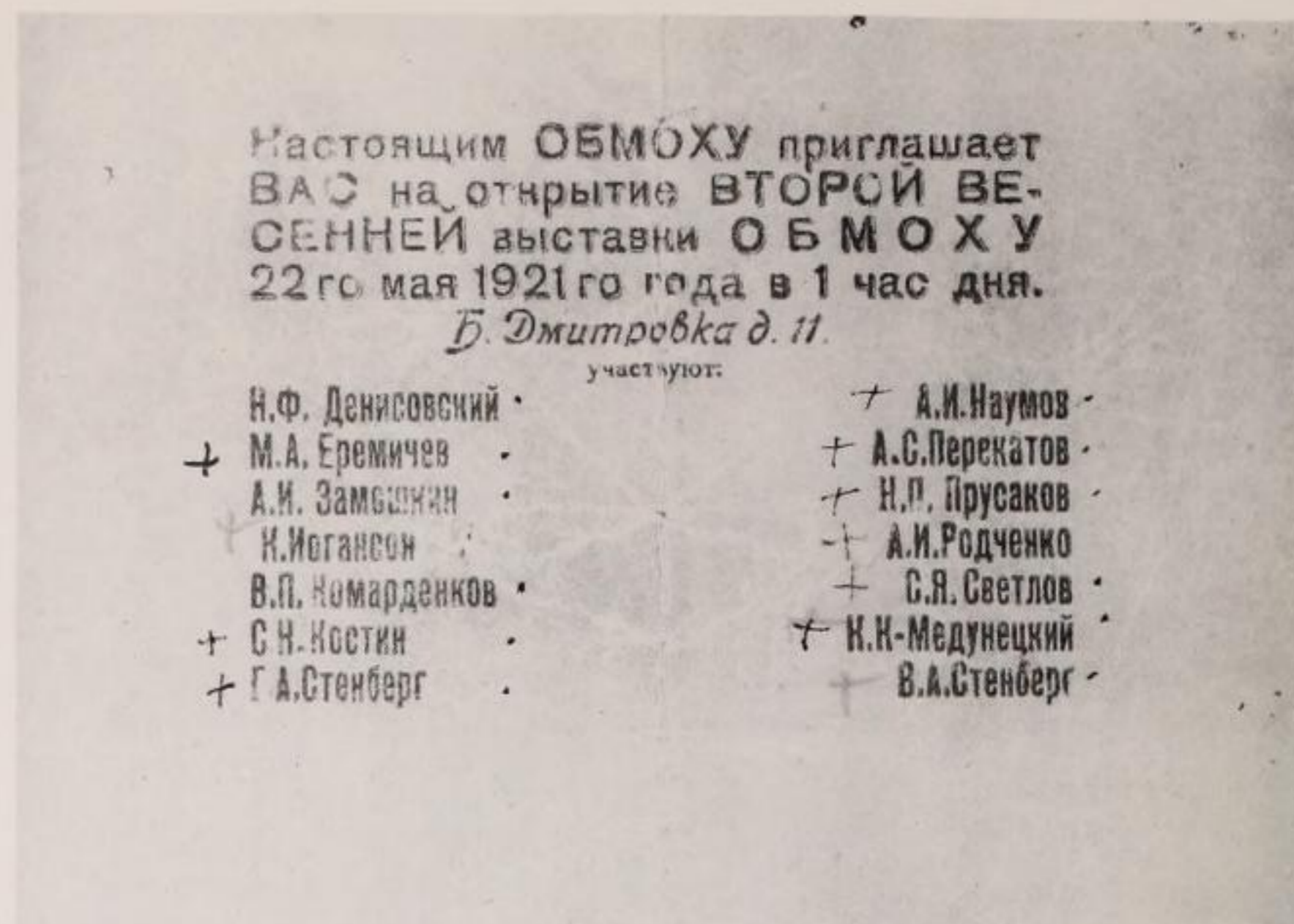


fig. 5
Invitation card to Obmokhu exhibition, Moscow, May–June 1921.

former Fabergé shop at 4 Kuznetskii most (on the corner of Neglinnaia Street), and funds for outfitting it were approved by Narkompros in September 1920.¹⁶

Obmokhu functioned not only as an association of like-minded artists but, above all, as a Productivist artel, filling commissions and serving the artistic needs of the new society and the new state. Surviving documents give some idea of Obmokhu's activities in 1920–21: Narkompros's Financial Department paid out specific sums "for the execution of a poster supporting the Decree on the Abolition of Illiteracy," "for the execution of four stamps for the All-Russian Special Commission to Abolish Illiteracy," for stencils, ornaments, slogan boards, and so on. A commission for "thirty-six monumental panels," to be made from sheets of iron roofing, was received and filled (fig. no. 4). The accounts and financial documents were signed by both Denisovskii, Obmokhu's president, and by Vladimir Stenberg, who signed himself as "chief of production" (and sometimes as president).¹⁷

This artel work provided the members of Obmokhu with their livelihood. Orders, which came chiefly from the departments and commissions of Narkompros, were filled collectively, hence the credit for them was also collective—the artel's "artistic production" was signed only "Obmokhu." Payment was likewise shared equally among all members who had helped fill a commission—and these included artists who never displayed their work at Obmokhu's exhibitions.¹⁸

It was the second Obmokhu exhibition, known in the scholarly literature as the third, that ensured the group's fame. That it was indeed the second rather than the third is reflected in the invitation card to the exhibition (fig. no. 5), whose announcement of Obmokhu's *Vtoraia vesenniaia vystavka* (*Second Spring Exhibition*) has been a source of bewilderment to scholars trusting Lobanov's enumeration.¹⁹ The exhibition poster prepared by Komardenkov (fig. no. 6) states explicitly, moreover, that the exhibition was organized by Narkompros; it was officially the Twenty-Second Exhibition of the Central Section of Izo Narkompros. Lobanov skipped over this fact, which didn't jibe with his scheme of antithetical "eclectic Narkompros exhibitions" and exhibitions of "artists united by a shared principle." The exhibitors listed on the invitation card were, with the exception of Karl Ioganson and Aleksandr Rodchenko, mechanically transcribed by Lobanov onto his list of the "founders of Obmokhu."²⁰

The second Obmokhu exhibition opened in Moscow on May 22, 1921, at 11 Bol'shaia Dmitrovka, the former Mikhailova Salon. Though Rodchenko and Ioganson participated in the exhibition, their works, along with those of Konstantin Medunetskii and Georgii and Vladimir Stenberg, were shown in a separate hall—constituting, as it were, an exhibition within the exhibition, as the famous installation photographs documenting the displays of only Rodchenko's "faction," confirm. Those months were a period of turmoil for the proponents of production art, and in that context the second Obmokhu exhibition was used as a forum for asserting the new forms championed by the First Working Group of Constructivists of Inkhuk, a group which had formed in the spring of 1921 and almost all of whose members (Aleksei Gan and Varvara Stepanova were the exceptions) participated in the second Obmokhu exhibition. So voluminous is the literature, generously sprinkled with documentary material, that has been devoted to the emergence and development of Constructivism in Russian art that there is no need to dwell here on the significance of the second Obmokhu exhibition. It ought rather to be emphasized that, thanks to this exhibition, the character of Obmokhu has forevermore been painted, so to speak, in Constructivist colors. For both contemporaries and succeeding generations, Obmokhu has been indissolubly



fig. 6
Poster for Obmokhu exhibition, Moscow, May–June 1921.
Collection N. D. Lobanov-Rostovsky.

linked with the early stage of Constructivism, overshadowing and supplanting other aspects of Obmokhu's collective endeavor. The discussions which took place at Inkhuk in late 1921 solidified Obmokhu's status as a "society of Constructivists."

The "color constructions," "constructions of spatial structures," and "spatial constructions" shown at the second Obmokhu exhibition were the fruit of "laboratory Constructivism," of the theoretical and practical formulations worked out by the First Working Group of Constructivists, to which the five exhibitors with Obmokhu—Ioganson, Rodchenko, Medunetskii, and Georgii and Vladimir Stenberg—belonged from the first months of Inkhuk's existence. The "constructions of spatial structures" exhibited by the Stenbergs also had a direct connection with the program of study and student assignments in the special laboratory of Vkhutemas's Architecture Faculty which Vladimir Stenberg—senior assistant in the laboratory—had developed in close collaboration with the laboratory head, Anton Lavinskii.²¹

The conjunction of "laboratory" works of early Constructivism, on the one hand, and, on the other, distinctly utilitarian posters promoting the measures of the All-Russian Special Commission to Abolish Illiteracy made for the diversity and heterogeneity of both the second Obmokhu exhibition and the production of Obmokhu as a whole. Further self-definition by the participants in Obmokhu's exhibitions and crystallization of their artistic aspirations could lead only to splintering and the collapse of the society. The Stenbergs and Medunetskii formed a group of their own, forthrightly calling themselves *Konstruktivisty* (the Constructivists); their exhibition opened in January 1922.

In the autumn of 1922, the members of Obmokhu showed their work at the *Erste russische Kunstausstellung* (First Russian Art Exhibition, Berlin); Obmokhu's president, Denisovskii, had expended great effort on collecting and organizing work for the exhibition.²² It is impossible, however, to label this Obmokhu's last collaborative venture, for each of Obmokhu's members showed his own individual works. In contrast to, say, the "Vitebsk school"—which was set off both at the exhibition and in the exhibition catalogue—Obmokhu did not exhibit as such in Berlin; by the time of the Berlin exhibition, Obmokhu no longer existed.

"The members of Obmokhu," Lobanov writes, "organized their fourth exhibition in conjunction with the Congress of the Comintern, showing their current Productivist works."²³ Nineteen twenty-three is the year assigned to this putative exhibition in the first volume of *Vystavki sovetskogo izobrazitel'nogo iskusstva* (Exhibitions of Soviet Fine Art), a reference work cited in all subsequent publications.²⁴ There was, however, no Congress of the Comintern in 1923; congresses were held in 1919, 1920, 1921, 1922, 1924, 1928, and 1935. An extensive program of cultural events did coincide with the Third Congress of the Comintern, held in Moscow in June–July 1921. The Hotel Kontinental', where the congress delegates were housed, was the site of an exhibition that included works by Kazimir Malevich, Tatlin, Il'ia Mashkov, and others; a fragment of this exhibition is visible in a photograph taken of a group of delegates.²⁵ Lobanov was surely describing this 1921 exhibition, inasmuch as in November 1922 all events in honor of the Fourth Congress of the Comintern were held in Petrograd; and in 1923, as has already been noted, there was no congress at all. It is highly unlikely that Obmokhu mounted two different exhibitions in June 1921; the second Obmokhu exhibition on Bol'shaia Dmitrovka, which opened at the end of May and was, consequently, on view in June, was Obmokhu's response to the Congress of the Comintern. A number of works by Obmokhu apparently were

shown at the Hotel Kontinental' exhibition (information on this exhibition is extremely hard to come by), but one would be hard pressed to call it the fourth Obmokhu exhibition.

The catalogue of the *Vtoraia vystavka kinoplakata* (Second Exhibition of Film Posters), held in Moscow in February 1926, is the last place in which the name Obmokhu appears to denote the affiliation of one or another artist. It is true that only Naumov, Prusakov, and Grigorii Borisov (Prusakov's collaborator on many film posters) are listed here as members of Obmokhu. Neither the Stenbergs nor Medunetskii nor Rodchenko, all of whom also participated in the exhibition, are cited as such (which is only natural in the case of Rodchenko: like Ioganson, he was never identified anywhere as a "member of Obmokhu"). This forces one to assume that, for the former members of the First Working Group of Constructivists, the alliance with Obmokhu was a brief episode; they did not in the mid-1920s include themselves among its active members.

These facts about the history of Obmokhu, then, are clear. The association initially called Obmolkhud began forming in the autumn of 1919 at the First Free State Art Workshops, the former Stroganov School. Its initiators were students in the "workshop without a supervisor" (Aleksandrov, Echeistov, Egorov, Glushkov, Kozlova, Menshutin, Naumov, Prusakov, Svetlov, Zharova, and Zhukov), joined by the "Iakulovists" (Denisovskii, Kostin, Medunetskii, and Georgii and Vladimir Stenberg) and the "Lentulovists" (Mikhail Eremichev, Iakovlev, Komardentov, Perekatov, and Zamoshkin). A portion of the first group (Aleksandrov, Echeistov, Egorov, Menshutin, Svetlov, and Zhukov) were also students of Iakulov's.

Obmokhu organized two exhibitions. The first Obmokhu exhibition was held May 2–16, 1920, at the First Free State Art Workshops at 11 Rozhdestvenka, the second (the Twenty-Second Exhibition of the Central Section of Izo Narkompros) in May–June 1921 at the former Mikhailova Salon at 11 Bol'shaia Dmitrovka. It is possible that Obmokhu participated in a June 1921 exhibition, at the Hotel Kontinental' on Teatral'naia Square, that coincided with the Third Congress of the Comintern. Those who participated in the two Obmokhu exhibitions were Denisovskii, Eremichev, Iakovlev, Ioganson, Komardentov, Kostin, Medunetskii, Naumov, Perekatov, Prusakov, Rodchenko, Georgii and Vladimir Stenberg, Svetlov, and Zamoshkin. The activity of Obmokhu reached its peak in the 1920–21 season, after which it fell off; in 1922, Obmokhu ceased to function.

Following Obmokhu's dissolution, three of the participants in its exhibitions—Medunetskii and Georgii and Vladimir Stenberg—formed the Constructivists group in 1922, while in 1925 Denisovskii and Kostin joined Ost (the Society of Easel Painters). Denisovskii and Kostin, along with Svetlov, also participated in joint exhibitions with Iakulov, which were designated "exhibitions of Iakulov and his workshop."²⁶

—Translated, from the Russian, by Jane Bobko

Notes

1. V. M. Lobanov, *Khudozhestvennye gruppirovki za poslednie 25 let* (Moscow: Obshchestvo AKhR, 1930), pp. 87, 90. Lobanov was taken "at his word" by the compilers of *Vystavki sovetskogo izobrazitel'nogo iskusstva*, where the Twenty-First State Exhibition is likewise labeled Izo Narkompros's "last." *Vystavki sovetskogo izobrazitel'nogo iskusstva. Spravochnik* (Moscow: Sovetskii khudozhnik, 1965), vol. 1, p. 74.
2. The invitation card reads: "June 1921. Twenty-Third Exhibition of the Central Section of Izo Narkompros. Murals by the artist Marc Chagall . . . In the hall of the State Jewish Kamernyi Theater (12 Bol'shoi Chernyshevskii)."
3. Lobanov, *Khudozhestvennye gruppirovki*, p. 105.
4. On Shchetinin's life and work, see A. S. Shatskikh, "'Prorubaia okno v chelovecheskoe miroponimanie . . .'" Zhizn' G. B. Shchetinina (1891–1921)," in *Panorama iskusstv 8* (Moscow: Sovetskii khudozhnik, 1985), pp. 255–74.
5. Echeistov's letters and autobiography cited below are in a private archive, Moscow.
6. Nikolai Musatov, conversation with author, October 1985. Musatov, born in 1895, was a student of Iakulov's in the First Free State Art Workshops.
7. Thus Denisovskii and Musatov worked only in Iakulov's special workshop, Zamoshkin and Komardenkov only in Lentulov's, and so on.
8. G[eorgii] Shch[etinin], "I-yi god raboty gosudarstvennykh khudozhestvennykh masterskikh," *Iskusstvo 7* (August 2, 1919), pp. 4–5.
9. Lidiia Zharova-Naumova, conversation with author, September 1983.
10. Thus Denisovskii gave 1919 as the year of his graduation, Komardenkov 1919 or 1920, and the Stenbergs 1920. As for the students in the "workshop without a supervisor," Aleksandrov, for example, graduated from Vkhutemas in 1924, Zhukov in 1920, Menshutin in 1922, Prusakov in 1920, and Svetlov in 1924. Manuscript Division, State Tret'iakov Gallery, Moscow, f. 91.
11. He was referring, according to Zharova-Naumova, to Grigor'ev's "appropriation" of the conception behind Kostin's stage-design work. A stage designer, painter, and graphic artist, Kostin—the nephew of N. N. Sapunov—later created many sets for the Bol'shoi Theater. Lidiia Zharova-Naumova, conversation with author, September 1983.
12. The bylaws Echeistov mentions evidently resembled to some degree those of Mastarchuv. Mastarchuv was created by Shchetinin and Echeistov in January 1919. See Shatskikh, "'Prorubaia okno v chelovecheskoe miroponimanie . . .,'" pp. 264–65.
13. A photograph of Zharova-Naumova taken in the burned-out workshop is reproduced in V. Dokuchaeva, *Lidiia Naumova* (Moscow: Sovetskii khudozhnik, 1984), p. 8.
14. "Vystavka rabot pervykh gosudarstvennykh svobodnykh khudozhestvennykh masterskikh," *Iskusstvo 6* (July 8, 1919), p. 2.
15. Echeistov's letter makes it possible to be still more exact about the date of Tatlin's departure from the Moscow Svomas and indicates one reason for it. The work commissioned from Tatlin was a monument in honor of the anniversary of the October Revolution; as work on the monument progressed, it became the model for the *Pamiatnik III-emu Internatsionalu* (*Monument to the Third International*).
16. "Agitatsionno-proizvodstvennaia masterskaia Vysshikh gosudarstvennykh khudozhestvennykh masterskikh. Smeta," Central State Archive of Russia, Moscow, f. 2306, op. 31, d. 617, l. 53.
17. Quoted from documents in the Central State Archive of Russia, Moscow, f. 2306, op. 31, ed. khr. 614, l. 83, 84, 98.
18. Komardenkov's memoirs, published in abbreviated form as *Dni minuvshie* (Moscow: Sovetskii khudozhnik, 1972) are available in a fuller variant in the Central State Archive for Literature and Art, Moscow, f. 1337, op. 3, ed. khr. 49. Written late in Komardenkov's life, these memoirs contain many inaccuracies and distortions, making it impossible to rely on them to establish a consistent history of Obmokhu. Many particulars recalled by the artist, however, do allow one to reconstruct the day-to-day life of Obmokhu. Komardenkov describes in detail Obmokhu's functioning as an artistic-production artel.
19. Christina Lodder has paid particular attention to this apparent inconsistency, but advances an unlikely proposition: "The invitation to the 1921 show used the title *Second Spring Exhibition* rather than *Second Exhibition*, so it is possible that this was the group's second spring exhibition but its third show overall. (According to Lobanov, the 1919 exhibition also opened in the spring.) This seems the most probable explanation." Christina Lodder, "Constructivism and Productivism in the 1920s," in *Art Into Life: Russian Constructivism, 1914–1932*, catalogue for exhibition organized by the Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle, the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, and the State Tret'iakov Gallery, Moscow (New York: Rizzoli, 1990), p. 102.
20. Lobanov, *Khudozhestvennye gruppirovki*, p. 104.
21. Central State Archive for Literature and Art, Moscow, f. 681, op. 2, ed. khr. 411, l. 13.
22. V. P. Lapshin, "Pervaia vystavka russkogo iskusstva. Berlin. 1922 god. Materialy k istorii sovetsko-germanskikh khudozhestvennykh svyazei," *Sovetskoe iskusstvoznanie 1* (1982), pp. 327–62.
23. Lobanov, *Khudozhestvennye gruppirovki*, p. 105.
24. "Chetvertaia vystavka Obmokhu," in *Vystavki sovetskogo izobrazitel'nogo iskusstva*, p. 114. The information about the exhibition given here relies on a single source—Lobanov.
25. *Kommunisticheskii internatsional 18* (1921), p. 4708.
26. See, for example, the notice "Vystavka Iakulova," *Ermitazh 12* (August 1–7, 1922), p. 14.

The Great Utopia

*The Russian and Soviet Avant-Garde,
1915–1932*

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum

State Tret'iakov Gallery

State Russian Museum

Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt

G U G G E N H E I M M U S E U M

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Kazimir Malevich
*Red Square (Painterly Realism: Peasant Woman
in Two Dimensions)*, 1915
State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg

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March 1-May 10, 1992

Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam
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Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum
September 25-December 15, 1992

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Prefaces

Thomas Krens, Michael Govan

x

Vladimir Gusev, Evgeniia Petrova, Iurii Korolev

xiii

Jürgen Weber

xiv

Contents

The Politics of the Avant-Garde

Paul Wood

1

The Artisan and the Prophet: Marginal Notes on Two Artistic Careers

Vasilii Rakitin

25

The Critical Reception of the 0.10 Exhibition: Malevich and Benua

Jane A. Sharp

38

Unovis: Epicenter of a New World

Aleksandra Shatskikh

53

COLOR PLATES 1-318

A Brief History of Obmokhu

Aleksandra Shatskikh

257

The Transition to Constructivism

Christina Lodder

266

The Place of Vkhutemas in the Russian Avant-Garde

Natal'ia Adaskina

282

What Is Linearism?

Aleksandr Lavrent'ev

294

The Constructivists: Modernism on the Way to Modernization

Hubertus Gassner

298

The Third Path to Non-Objectivity

Evgenii Kovtun

320

COLOR PLATES 319-482

The Poetry of Science: Projectionism and Electroorganism

Irina Lebedeva

441

Terms of Transition: The First Discussional Exhibition and the Society of Easel Painters

Charlotte Douglas

450

The Russian Presence in the 1924 Venice Biennale

Vivian Endicott Barnett

466

The Creation of the Museum of Painterly Culture

Svetlana Dzhafarova

474

Fragmentation versus Totality: The Politics of (De)framing

Margarita Tupitsyn

482

COLOR PLATES 483-733

The Art of the Soviet Book, 1922-32

Susan Compton

609

Soviet Porcelain of the 1920s: Propaganda Tool

Nina Lobanov-Rostovsky

622

Russian Fabric Design, 1928-32

Charlotte Douglas

634

How Meierkhol'd Never Worked with Tatlin, and What Happened as a Result

Elena Rakitin

649

Nonarchitects in Architecture

Anatolii Strigalev

665

Mediating Creativity and Politics: Sixty Years of Architectural Competitions in Russia

Catherine Cooke

680

Index of Artists and Works

716