



4th FLOOR HISTORY OF MENTALITY. FRIEND OR FOE

"You cannot escape your era. Whichever side you take, for or against, you are still inside it." T. Bachelis's dictum can be applied to the unofficial Russian artists of the postwar era, the so-called Soviet nonconformists or the masters of the 'second avant-garde' of the 1950s to 1980s. The guiding mission of these disparate art groups was an intention to break free from the ideological framework of Soviet visual culture, to end the monopoly of one single style and purge art from a strict and loathsome structure.

Eclectic aesthetics were expressed everywhere: in the spirit of the works themselves, their content, images, meanings and techniques. Unofficial underground artists were subjected to harsh censorship and derogatory criticism, with no right to exhibit their work in museums. The majority found themselves in direct opposition to the 'artistic falsehood' of the official regime. The KGB joined the conflict and artists were taken to the Lubyanka, blackmailed and put under pressure. As a result many ended up in emigration, unable to continue free creative work in their own country.

Among the artists featured at the exhibition are the group known as the Lianozovo circle, here represented by Nikolai Vechtomov, Lidia Masterkova and Vladimir Nemukhin; 1960s nonconformists Igor Vulokh and Sergei Bordachev; Leningrad underground artist Leonid Borisov; members of the New Artists association Timur Novikov, Oleg Maslov, Andrey Krisanov, Oleg Kotelnikov and Inal Savchenkov; Moscow conceptualist Igor Makarevich; and also Vladimir Weisberg, who focused attention on the scientific understanding of colourism in painting. Sots Art is represented by Leonid Sokov's iconic work 'Two Profiles'.