

SUPPLEMENTI

Le donne storiche dell'arte  
tra tutela, ricerca  
e valorizzazione



IL CAPITALE CULTURALE  
*Studies on the Value of Cultural Heritage*

**eum**

*Rivista fondata da Massimo Montella*



## Il capitale culturale

*Studies on the Value of Cultural Heritage*

Supplementi n. 13, 2022

ISSN 2039-2362 (online)

ISBN (print) 978-88-6056-831-1; ISBN (pdf) 978-88-6056-832-8

© 2015 eum edizioni università di macerata

Registrazione al Roc n. 735551 del 14/12/2010

*Direttore / Editor in chief* Pietro Petrarola

*Co-direttori / Co-editors* Tommy D. Andersson, Elio Borghonovi, Rosanna Cioffi, Stefano Della Torre, Michela di Macco, Daniele Manacorda, Serge Noiret, Tonino Pencarelli, Angelo R. Pupino, Girolamo Sciuolo

*Coordinatore editoriale / Editorial coordinator* Maria Teresa Gigliozzi

*Coordinatore tecnico / Managing coordinator* Pierluigi Feliciati

*Comitato editoriale / Editorial board* Giuseppe Capriotti, Mara Cerquetti, Francesca Coltrinari, Patrizia Dragoni, Pierluigi Feliciati, Costanza Geddes da Filicaia, Maria Teresa Gigliozzi, Chiara Mariotti, Enrico Nicosia, Emanuela Stortoni

*Comitato scientifico - Sezione di beni culturali / Scientific Committee - Division of Cultural Heritage* Giuseppe Capriotti, Mara Cerquetti, Francesca Coltrinari, Patrizia Dragoni, Pierluigi Feliciati, Maria Teresa Gigliozzi, Susanne Adina Meyer, Marta Maria Montella, Umberto Moscatelli, Caterina Paparello, Sabina Pavone, Francesco Pirani, Mauro Saracco, Emanuela Stortoni, Carmen Vitale

*Comitato scientifico / Scientific Committee* Michela Addis, Mario Alberto Banti, Carla Barbati, Caterina Barilaro, Sergio Barile, Nadia Barrella, Gian Luigi Corinto, Lucia Corrain, Girolamo Cusimano, Maurizio De Vita, Fabio Donato, Maria Cristina Giambruno, Gaetano Golinelli, Rubén Lois Gonzalez, Susan Hazan, Joel Heuillon, Federico Marazzi, Raffaella Morselli, Paola Paniccia, Giuliano Pinto, Carlo Pongetti, Bernardino Quattrococchi, Margaret Rasulo, Orietta Rossi Pinelli, Massimiliano Rossi, Simonetta Stopponi, Cecilia Tasca, Andrea Ugolini, Frank Vermeulen, Alessandro Zuccari

*Web* <http://riviste.unimc.it/index.php/cap-cult>, email: [icc@unimc.it](mailto:icc@unimc.it)

*Editore / Publisher* eum edizioni università di macerata, Corso della Repubblica 51 – 62100 Macerata, tel (39) 733 258 6081, fax (39) 733 258 6086, <http://eum.unimc.it>, [info.ceum@unimc.it](mailto:info.ceum@unimc.it)

*Layout editor* Oltrepagina srl

*Progetto grafico / Graphics* +crocevia / studio grafico



Rivista accreditata WOS  
Rivista riconosciuta SCOPUS  
Rivista riconosciuta DOAJ  
Rivista indicizzata CUNSTA  
Rivista indicizzata SIMED  
Inclusa in ERIH-PLUS

# The unknown Dobychina: collector, museum worker and writer

Olga Muromtseva\*

## *Abstract*

The name of Nadezhda Dobychina (née Ghinda Nekha Fishman) and her Art Bureau are well known to art researchers and art lovers. Thanks to the “Last Futurist Exhibition. 0.10”, the Dobychina’s Bureau is mentioned in most of the books and articles dedicated to the history of modernism. It should be noted that Nadezhda Dobychina could hardly be named among the radical avant-gardists. Her interests as a collector and curator embraced, first of all, the artists of the “Mir Iskusstva”, the “Blue Rose”, of the Union of Russian Artists, she also had works by N. Goncharova, M. Larionov, D. Burliuk, N. Altman. The biography of Nadezhda Evseevna in the 1920s-1940s is rich by many bright episodes that allow us to assert that in Soviet times, she played an important role in the art field as well. After the Revolution she was appointed the head of the exhibitions department of Petrograd branch of the IZO Commissariat for Education, participating in the organization of the “First State Free Exhibition of Works of Art” which was inaugurated the 13th of April, 1919 in the nationalized Winter Palace. Later she headed the exhibition department of the

\* Olga Muromtseva, PhD in Historical Sciences, Associate Professor at the Department of History and Theory of Arts Restoration Faculty, Russian State Stroganov University of Design and Applied Arts; Executive Director of the Cultural-charity Foundation U-ART, [www.u-art.ru](http://www.u-art.ru), 119571 Leninsky pr, 156, Moscow, e-mail: [olga@u-art.ru](mailto:olga@u-art.ru).

House of Arts, organized by M. Gorky, as well as the department of exhibitions at the Society for the Encouragement of Arts. In 1926 she was elected chairman of the Chamber Music Society. From 1932 to 1934 she worked as a Senior Researcher at the Russian Museum, after which she moved to Moscow, where she headed the Art Department of the Museum of the Revolution. All these years Nadezhda Evseevna kept her art collection and continued to write memories which are kept together with her correspondence in the archive donated to the State Russian Library.

Il nome di Nadezhda Dobychnina (nata Ghinda Nekha Fishman) e il suo Art Bureau sono ben noti ai ricercatori e agli amanti d'arte. Grazie alla "Last Futurist Exhibition. 0.10", il Bureau della Dobychnina è citato nella maggior parte dei libri e degli articoli dedicati alla storia del modernismo. Va notato che Nadezhda Dobychnina difficilmente potrebbe essere nominata tra le avanguardie radicali. I suoi interessi di collezionista e curatrice abbracciavano, in primis, gli artisti della "Mir Iskusstva", la "Blue Rose", dell'Unione degli Artisti Russi, ha avuto anche le opere di N. Goncharova, M. Larionov, D. Burliuk, N. Altman. La biografia di Nadezhda Evseevna negli anni '20-'40 è ricca di molti episodi luminosi che ci permettono di affermare che in epoca sovietica svolse un ruolo importante anche nel campo dell'arte. Dopo la Rivoluzione fu nominata capo del dipartimento mostre della filiale di Pietrogrado del Commissariato IZO per l'Educazione, partecipando all'organizzazione della "Prima Esposizione Statale di Opere d'Arte" che fu inaugurata il 13 aprile 1919 nel nazionalizzato Palazzo d'Inverno. Successivamente ha diretto il dipartimento espositivo della House of Arts, organizzato da M. Gorky, nonché il dipartimento delle mostre presso la Society for the Encouragement of Arts. Nel 1926 fu eletta presidente della Chamber Music Society. Dal 1932 al 1934 ha lavorato come ricercatrice senior presso il Museo Russo, dopodiché si è trasferita a Mosca, dove ha diretto il Dipartimento d'Arte del Museo della Rivoluzione. Per tutti questi anni Nadezhda Dobychnina conservava la sua collezione d'arte e continuava a scrivere ricordi che sono conservati insieme alla sua corrispondenza nell'archivio donato alla Biblioteca statale russa.

The name of Nadezhda Dobychnina (née Ghinda Nekha Fishman) is rather well-known by art historians and art collectors (fig. 1). Her Art Bureau is mentioned in most of the literature on the history of modernism thanks to the "Last Futurist Exhibition. 0,10", which marked the birth of Suprematism and the beginning of its dramatic opposition to Constructivism. "0.10" exposition included the famous Kazimir Malevich's "Black Square" and the Vladimir Tatlin's corner counter-relief presented to the public in December, 1915 in the Dobychnina's Bureau in the *Adamini house* at *Marsovo Pole* (the Field of Mars Square), Saint Petersburg, where she had rented a multi-room apartment since the summer 1914 (fig. 2). It should be noted though that, Dobychnina herself wasn't actively involved in the organization of that prominent art event. The avant-garde artists Ivan Puni and Xenia Boguslavskaya, who sold their paintings, including through the Dobychnina's Bureau, organized and financially supported the "0.10 Exhibition" as well as the "First Futurist exhibition Tram V" in 1915. Dobychnina can hardly be classified as a radical avant-garde figure and an active promoter of the leftist trends in art, although she had close friendships and professional ties with many of the avant-garde artists.

However, it's quite interesting to trace Dobychnina's first steps in the art field which practically coincided with the birth of the avant-garde. In 1907 she began to work with Nikolai Ivanovich Kulbin, a doctor by profession and an artist in his heart. Kulbin is famous as a painter, art theorist, and patron of Russian Futurism. Dobychnina was involved in the organization of lectures and art exhibitions curated and promoted by Kulbin. She was the secretary of the famous exhibitions "Impressionists" (1909) and "Triangle" (1910) held in Saint Petersburg. At the beginning of XXs century in Russia the term "impressionism" acquired an ideological revolutionary meaning. In the artistic context of those years, "impressionism" meant the artists' liberation from traditions, all sorts of dogmas and conventions, a rebellion against academicism; synthesis of the arts and freedom of expression by various means; finally, a set of new European art trends (the terms "post-impressionism", "pointillism", "fauvism" were not widely spread in Russia). Therefore, the exhibitions promoted by Kulbin with the assistance of Dobychnina were very progressive and innovative at that time.

The documents from Dobychnina's archive (Russian State library, Moscow) prove, she was in charge of almost all administrative issues regarding the Kulbin's art events: from obtaining authorization from authorities to communication with press and general public. The idea of organizing her own art bureau, according to her statement, came to her in 1911. The year before together with the famous symbolist poet Sergey Gorodetsky she planned to edit a literary and art magazine "List". This idea was never realized, unlike the other one. In October 1912 she opened a small art gallery in her apartment on Divenskaya str., Saint Petersburg. The official announcement of the Bureau's opening claimed that its aim was «live mediation between artists and the public in the sale of art works and the execution of all kinds of artistic works, such as: paintings, scenery, costumes, applied art, artistic arrangement of apartment furnishings, etc.» The Art Bureau was conceived as a multidisciplinary project, as its other function was «assisting in the selection and staging of a theatrical play, organizing concerts, opera performances, musical and literary evenings, etc.». Finally, Dobychnina planned to make some research if needed «to provide information on various art issues upon request»<sup>1</sup>.

In the first season – 1911-1912 – Dobychnina presented to the public the so-called *Permanent exhibition of paintings*, which included, as one of the art critics noted, «works of artists of all art movements and trends, from the excellent Shishkin's drawing, the Kramskoy's pencil portrait, to the graphics by Roerich, Dobuzhinsky, Ostroumova Lebedeva and the artists of the *Mir Iskusstva* (the "World of Art") in general, and ending with the works of ex-

<sup>1</sup> Moscow, Russian State Library (henceforth RSL), the Department of Manuscripts, Fund 420.1.3.

treme youth»<sup>2</sup>. It seems that the Dobychina's gallery was financially successful as in September 1913 she moved to a larger apartment with better location on the embankment of the Moika River. Since October 1913 the Bureau's activities were widely covered in press. The first exhibition in the new halls attracted the attention of the most famous art critics. Some of them enthusiastically noted again, that the boundaries between individual artistic communities and art trends seemed to disappear inside the Bureau, and «modern art itself came to the fore». The works of art exhibited in several rooms of Dobychina's apartment encouraged them even to talk about «the fate of the Russian painting»<sup>3</sup>.

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a variety of venues was used for art exhibitions: galleries, shops, banks and apartment buildings, luxurious halls of palaces, gymnasiums and theaters, but in such a big city as Saint Petersburg it was always a problem to find a suitable and available exhibition space. Another difficulty was caused by obtaining permissions from the city authorities to open an exhibition in one place or another because of the rather strict fire safety regulations and other requirements. Thus, the problem of the lack of exposition halls in St. Petersburg became especially acute in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Two main exhibition spaces in the capital belonged to the State Academy of Arts and the Society for the Encouragement of Artists. Both organizations preferred to stick to a fairly conservative line and very reluctantly provided their halls for demonstration of the non-academic art as Dobychina dared to do.

Since 1913 she organized group exhibitions combined by artworks by different artists as well as thematic and solo exhibitions. The Bureau's exhibition program was very diverse, but overall moderate and thoughtful. Despite the gallery's specialization in exhibiting and selling paintings and drawings, temporary exhibitions allowed its owner to show all kinds and genres of modern art from pictorial photography to urban architectural projects. Mostly Dobychina preferred to deal with the artists of the St. Petersburg school, formed by the circle of *Mir iskusstva* ("The World of Art") and its leader A.N. Benoit, who already enjoyed a certain fame among collectors. However, the Dobychina's contacts' network was very wide. Many of her professional and personal connections were established through the mediation of Nikolai Kulbin, already mentioned above. For example, this was the case with Wassily Kandinsky, with whom Kulbin and Dobychina negotiated a personal exhibition in 1913, at that time the Kandinsky's art was practically unknown in Russia.

In 1914 Dobychina took a risk of opening an extensive exposition of the avant-garde artist Natalia Goncharova in her Art Bureau. The same year she helped to organize meetings with the leader of the Italian futurists Filippo To-

<sup>2</sup> Magula G. «Novoe Vremya» («New Time»), 29 March 1913, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> RSL, the Department of Manuscripts, Fund 420.1.32.

maso Marinetti, whose arrival caused a real storm in the Russian artistic environment. On the famous photograph, Dobychnina is seated in the front row next to Kulbin and Filippo Tomaso Marinetti at a meeting with the leader of the Italian Futurists on February 1, 1914 in St. Petersburg (fig. 3). The stay of Marinetti in Moscow and St. Petersburg lasted from January 26 to February 17, 1914. Some Moscow leftist artists headed by Mikhail Larionov opposed the Italian artist questioning his leadership in avant-garde movement, while St. Petersburg artistic circles greeted him with more courtesy.

The most brilliant period for the Dobychnina's Bureau began with its moving to the spacious apartment in the *Adamini house*, which practically coincided with the beginning of the First World war. The Bureau continued to function actively during the war years, organizing temporary exhibitions, charity auctions, lectures and musical evenings. It was at this time that artistic life became more intense, partly due to the return of many artists to Russia in connection with the war in Europe. The art market flourished, and art sales skyrocketed. The contemporaries recalled that the vernissages in Dobychnina's salon gathered crowds of people, «the gallery was besieged by buyers». Her own marks in the margins of the exhibition catalogues demonstrate the artworks' prices and the names of their purchasers, among whom were several members of the Royal family. In those years she planned an exhibition of Persian art and even gave a newspaper announcement about the opening of an exposition "The City – Garden" (both projects were not realized) which will «demonstrate to the general public all the advantages of the system of a new arrangement of building in the form of garden cities, which has recently become widespread in England and in general in Western Europe»<sup>4</sup>. Given the trip to Europe undertaken by Dobychnina before the beginning of the war in 1914, it can be assumed that she sought to enter the international art market and intended to acquaint the Russian public with the latest cultural trends despite the changed circumstances. International and domestic political events hindered the implementation of these plans.

Nadezhda Dobychnina managed to maintain her influence in the art world after the October revolution. In November 1917 Anatoly Lunacharsky, head of the People's Commissariat for Education (Narkompros) and Dobychnina's friend, signed a document confirming that «the exhibition halls of Dobychnina's Bureau are necessary for the organization of folk-art exhibitions and lectures on art, in view of which the requisition of the said premises for other needs is unacceptable»<sup>5</sup>. The Lunacharsky's support as well as Dobychnina's friendship with Maxim Gorky served as a guarantee of protection in that turbulent time. But despite that, the Art Bureau ceased its activities in October

<sup>4</sup> «Novoe Vremya» («New Time»), 15 May 1916, p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> RSL, the Department of Manuscripts, Fund 420.1.16.

1918 as well as many other private enterprises. The country was engulfed in civil war and famine.

The documents from Dobychina's archive prove that she didn't stop art dealing activities in the first post-revolutionary years and at the same time she continued to collect works of art herself. Apparently, the Dobychina's art collection was formed both during the years of her Bureau's functioning and after its closure in 1918. Its composition changed greatly, which was naturally connected with her professional activities. Talking about the collection's evolution, the most representative sources are the three inventories, made in 1919, 1924 and 1930. Based on these documents, let us analyze which works Nadezhda kept in her possession for a long time, despite the attempts of requisition undertaken by the Soviet government officials. In her collection various artistic trends and different generations of artists were presented:

- She had many graphic works by her friend Alexander Benois, the leader of *Mir Iskusstva*
- Paintings by symbolists V. Borisov-Musatov, M. Saryan and others (Figg. 4, 5 – M. Saryan, D. Stelletsy)
- Prominent art works by Natalia Goncharova and Mikhail Larionov

Overall, we can conclude that Dobychina did not collect abstract art (perhaps only with the exception of W. Kandinsky), neither sculpture and counter-reliefs or assemblages. She preferred rather colorful landscapes and still-lives as well as theater design graphics. The adornment of her collection were her own portraits, created by her friends at different times and demonstrating various facets of her nature. In the diary of the 1940s, Dobychina wrote about her wish to donate the collection to the Soviet state: «It is incomprehensible to everyone how this “beggar” (this is me) wants to live in a separate apartment, wants to have a “collection”, wants to donate this collection at the end of her life to a state that is richer than me!»<sup>6</sup>. Probably her idea didn't meet any approval of her family and friends many of them experienced the enormity and horror of the Stalinist regime on their own or on the fate of their loved ones. Dobychina's son Daniil inherited the collection after her death and its integrity was not preserved.

The history of the Dobychina's collection, as well as her role in the post-revolutionary period, are still the least studied topics. Little known is the fact that Nadezhda Dobychina worked as the head of the exhibitions department of Petrograd branch of the IZO Commissariat for Education, participating in the organization of the “First State Free Exhibition of Works of Art” which was inaugurated the 13<sup>th</sup> of April, 1919 in the nationalized Winter Palace. This large-scale exhibition project included more than 1800 works by 359 artists who represented different artistic movements and art trends. In the former

<sup>6</sup> RSL, the Department of Manuscripts, Fund 420.1.22.

living rooms of the Royal family, one could see works by avant-gardists and by representatives of critical realism hanged on gilded walls. In terms of the number of exhibited works and the area occupied, at that time it was the largest exhibition ever held in Russia. The admission to the exhibition was free and it was visited by more than 40 thousand people. An educational program was also prepared: lectures and excursions. It was supposed to reveal the main idea of the project, declared in the catalog, namely «to help to realize art as a single phenomenon» and to see behind the art group differences the values that «all true art has in common»<sup>7</sup>. The purpose of the exhibition was not only popularizing modern art, but also making some profit. In July, three auctions of exhibited paintings were held, which collected 137 thousand rubles. Obviously, it was a very challenging task for the organizers (among them Dobychnina) to curate such a large-scale multi-task project taking into consideration problems with electricity and food supplies in Petrograd.

Dobychnina was also in charge of the arrangement of exhibitions in the House of Arts (*Dom Iskusstv*), founded in Petrograd by Maxim Gorky in 1919 and the exhibition department of the Society for the Encouragement of Arts. The experience she acquired before the revolution in exhibiting works of art, administering exhibitions, communicating with representatives of the artistic world was in great demand in the 1920s.

In 1925 Dobychnina went abroad for health treatment to Wiesbaden. The hard and hungry years of the revolution and the Civil war weakened her strength and affected her health. At that time, she was thinking about a possible emigration to Paris and was dreaming about the opening of an art gallery there, which she consulted with her friend A. Benois and her first husband P. Dobychnin. However, she was destined to return to her homeland and soon after that she was elected the chairman of the Chamber Music Society. It was unpaid social work that allowed her to re-engage in an active cultural life after her illness. Dobychnina had extensive experience in organizing musical evenings in her Bureau, at which the music of Stravinsky, Prokofiev and many other modern composers was performed. In the 1920s, she applied this experience to popularize classical music among the workers in accordance with the policy of the Bolsheviks.

In 1932 Dobychnina began to work at the Art Department of the State Russian Museum, where she took up changing expositions, organizing funds, and arranging exhibitions. Soon after the Soviet Revolution of 1917 the decree “On the Registration, Inventorisation and Protection of Works of Art and Antiques” was issued, many private collections were nationalized and some of them were relocated to the Russian Museum. Dobychnina wrote in her diaries

<sup>7</sup> Catalog of the First State Free Exhibition of Works of Art [Text]. – Petersburg: Palace of Arts, 1919. – 87, [1] p.; 18 cm.

that the nationalized works, stored for 15 years mixed and unlisted, needed to be sorted, described, restored, and divided between different departments. She managed to organize all the work despite of the lack of professional human resources, quite challenging conditions and constant pressure from the state officials. Thanks to her efforts, in 1935, the Conservation and Restoration Department was divided into laboratories and sections: painting, modern painting, sculpture, applied arts and folk art.

In 1932 Dobychnina was invited to become a member of the organizational commission in charge of the *15 Years of the Soviet Revolution* exhibition, which tended to present various artistic movements and all the first names of the Russian art from Ilya Repin to Kazimir Malevich. In total 2640 works by 423 artists were to be presented in 35 halls of the Russian museum. It should be noted though that despite the similarity of the declared goals with the 1919 Winter Palace exhibition, the project of 1932 was already realized in a completely different socio-political environment and under the tireless ideological control of the Communist Party. The committee headed by the party board members observed the formation of the exposition at once, selecting art works and rejecting those that, in their opinion, did not correspond to the party line. However, the exhibition concept suggested by Nadezhda Dobychnina and her colleague, art historian Nikolai Punin, was implemented with minimal changes. The decision to dedicate two halls to the leftist avant-garde artists – Pavel Filonov and Kazimir Malevich, taken by the curatorial group from the Russian museum, was quite radical and brave for the time of social realism dominance beginning. Malevich himself was very pleased with his exposition, which consisted of 30 works, including the famous plaster architectons (fig. 6). More than twice as many works by Filonov – 74 paintings – looked almost like a retrospective and, in fact, was some kind of compensation for the solo exhibition that was collected but never opened to the public in 1929. In the sculpture section, an aircraft created by V. Tatlin “Letatlin” was exhibited.

The most striking evidence of the significant role of N.Dobychnina in organizing the project is presented by a letter from Nikolai Punin dated October 17, 1932, in which he wrote to his colleague who left for Moscow in detail about the progress of the preparatory work and excitedly asked: «Why are there still no lists of artists? We need to make a catalog and a disposition of hangings. Is everything all right? Are there any new decisions and recommendations?» Obviously, Dobychnina had to coordinate the exhibition lists and other current issues with higher authorities and coped with this task successfully. At the end of the letter, Punin notes: «Please, remember – the exhibition consists of two things: the exhibition as such, and you. It is impossible to open the exhibition without you»<sup>8</sup>. The opening of the exhibition in Leningrad thus took place

<sup>8</sup> RSL, the Department of Manuscripts, Fund 420.14.44.

with the active participation of Nadezhda Dobychina on November 13, 1932, but it is quite possible that the liberties allowed in the exposition affected her position in the museum. In any case, the exposition in Moscow, which opened on June 27, 1933, had already undergone significant changes, and avant-garde works were included solely as objects for criticism.

Given the *15 Years of the Soviet Revolution* exhibition date, a parallel seems inevitable with a similar Italian large-scale exposition dedicated to the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the fascist regime which opened on October 28, 1932 in Rome. The best artistic forces belonging to various trends and working in different styles contributed to the Roman project: Mario Sironi, Enrico Prampolini, Mario De Renzi, Adalberto Libera, Giuseppe Terragni and many others. The exhibition in Rome was designed according to a completely different principle than the Soviet project. Its main task was to recreate the heroic history of fascist Italy and reinterpret a number of past events according to the new ideological doctrine while the Soviet exhibition was centered on the achievements in art only. Nevertheless, both grandiose projects demonstrate the ability of totalitarian regimes to use a wide variety of artistic methods for their own popularization, or rather, to demonstrate their power and reach.

The biography of Nadezhda Evseevna Dobychina is rich in all sorts of dramatic events, as well as the entire history of the formation of the Soviet state, of the Stalinist terror and of the Great Patriotic War is. Without dwelling on the many details and personal collisions, we will add that in 1935 Dobychina moved from Leningrad to Moscow, where she soon became the head of the Art department of the Museum of Revolution. Her rich experience helped her to create from scratch the concept and exhibition plan of one of the main Soviet museums at that time. Archival documents once again richly illustrate the daily activities of Dobychina, who was in charge of a variety of practical issues in the museum: from searching for finishing materials for the exposition to organizing business trips to search for exhibits (fig. 7). In the surviving drafts of her letters addressed to colleagues and superiors, one is struck by her decisiveness and involvement, her attention to the smallest details, which is always inherent in her. It can be assumed that despite the greater interest in art exhibitions than in purely revolutionary topics, she started the work in the Museum of the Revolution with all her characteristic fervor. Apparently, she couldn't do it any other way.

From her very youth, she dreamed of writing stories or memoirs, leaving on paper the thoughts and ideas that came to her mind. Starting from the late 1910s, she did not stop trying to keep a diary or make theoretical notes, however, most likely, complex life collisions, as well as a stormy professional activity, never allowed her to do this consistently and complete the notes she had begun. The most often she took up the pen during periods of illness and forced inactivity, which were soon changed by more active life stages. Through all these turbulent years Nadezhda Dobychina kept her notes with her. After

her death they were collected by her son Daniil and in 1960 given to the State Russian library together with her letters and documents. These episodic diaries and theoretical notes on the history of art, which she later formalized into articles, have never been published or studied before.

The most consistent presentation of Dobychina's theoretical concepts can be found in the manuscript addressed to the artist and art critic Igor Grabar. In it, Dobychina begins to talk about hack-work, which is clearly manifested in the social realism artworks commissioned by the Soviet state and about its causes. She talks about the relationship between the artist and the customer, and how important it is for the artist to understand, even sympathize with him. Her text practically begins with the following very scandalous statement for the Soviet era: «So the artist is anarchic. For him, freedom of creativity was the law. Freedom of the theme, freedom of the way of displaying was his path». Then she analyzes, with an eye to some possible censorship (the manuscript was still intended for publication), the situation in Soviet art: «Politically, in the mass, artists are completely inert. Without taking a direct part in our grandiose works, from the outside, and most importantly hastily, they began to fulfill orders. The customer, who is not serious about art, also hastily and shoutingly distributes orders. The artist did not organically enter, but was attracted. No one really spoke to him. Some "personalities" discussed with him historical materialism, dialectical materialism, Marxism in general [...] You can be sure that only a few remember something, know something, and the majority are trying to free their heads from annual class political studies. All conditions are fulfilled formally on both sides. Now we have to wait for the artists to paint and for the party to decide whether their art is good or not. Thus, a good half of the artists will disappear, another half will ruin themselves».<sup>9</sup> Such a very frank and, from a practical point of view, discouragingly clear description of Soviet official art was given by her in this article.

She also left unfinished memories of N.I.Kulbin and A.N.Benois – two prominent figures of the Russian art of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century who were her close friends. Their publications will allow to complement the well-known images of these famous personalities with new characteristics and a fresh look. Among Dobychina's notes one can find some art reviews and some opinions about several Soviet artists. The archive contains as well hundreds of letters written to her by artists, art critics, politicians and public figures. Dobychina's papers as well as her biography and especially her activities in the post-revolutionary period remain poorly studied, which makes this research especially relevant and innovative.

<sup>9</sup> RSL, the Department of Manuscripts, Fund 420.4.20.

*Appendix / Appendice*

Fig. 1. K.A.Somov. Portrait of Nadezhda Dobychina. 1921. Pencils and sanguine on paper. 41x29. KGallery, St. Petersburg

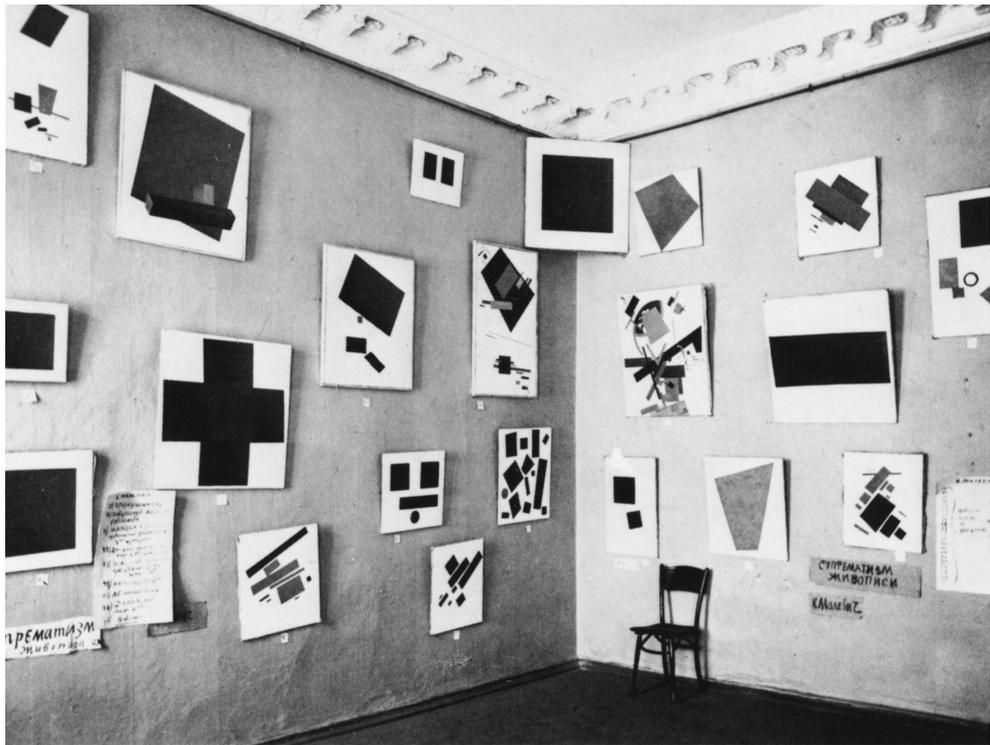


Fig. 2. The display of Kazimir Malevich's Suprematist canvases at The Last Futurist Exhibition of Paintings, 0.10 (Zero-Ten), Dobychina's Art Bureau, December 1915 – January 1916, Petrograd



Fig. 3. Meeting with Filippo Tommaso Marinetti. St. Petersburg, Kalashnikov Stock Exchange building. February 1, 1914



Fig. 4. M.S. Saryan. Still life. Yellow flowers in a blue vase. 1914. Tempera on cardboard. 82x74. The Museum of Russian Art (the collection of Prof. A. Ya. Abramyan), Yerevan, Armenia



Fig. 5. D.S. Stelletsy. Dawn. Tempera on canvas. 74,5x58,5. Collection of V.A.Dudakov, Moscow



Fig. 6. The Malevich's hall at the *15 Years of the Soviet Revolution* exhibition, 1932



Fig. 7. Photo of N.E. Dobychnina, the certificate of the employee of the Museum of the Revolution, valid till 1941