**Moscow Government**

**Multimedia Art Museum, Moscow**

present the exhibition

**Francisco Infante and Nonna Goryunova**

**Metaphysics, Metaphor, Metamorphosis**

**Curators:** Anna Zaitseva, Olga Sviblova

Opening 27 November 2019 – 16 February 2020

**Strategic Partner of the museum:** Mastercard

The Multimedia Art Museum, Moscow presents ‘Metaphysics, Metaphor, Metamorphosis’, a project by Francisco Infante and Nonna Goryunova. The exhibition showcases early paintings, graphics and design sketches that allow the viewer immersion in Infante’s creative laboratory, and also the Artefacts cycle, which the artist has worked on for more than 40 years in collaboration with Nonna Goryunova.

Francisco Infante is a laureate of the State Prize of the Russian Federation (1996) and a recognised classic of contemporary Russian art, one of the most striking representatives of unofficial Soviet culture. He was born in 1943 in the village of Vasilievka, Saratov Region, to the family of a Spanish Republican emigrant. His father passed away when the child was still very young. Francisco Infante studied at the Moscow Secondary Art School from 1956 to 1962 and graduated from the Moscow Art and Industrial School (Stroganovka) in 1966.

The academic art education received by Francisco Infante instilled the skills of copying old masters within the framework of socialist realism, the artistic direction that dominated those years. ‘... We were taught that here is the long-distance perspective, here is the foreground. But that was purely technique. They never told us what art really is,’ recalled Francisco Infante. ‘For me the problem of art came down to the growth of my own consciousness.’ Reflections on the metaphysical problems of the universe and the search for his own artistic language to express the infinity of the universe determined the artist’s path from early youth to the present day. He does not tire of repeating: ‘The world is not only endless, but also mysterious.’

Francisco Infante’s childhood and youth coincided with the time of Khrushchev’s Thaw, which briefly lifted the Iron Curtain separating Soviet art from world culture. In the 1950s and 1960s exhibitions of work by Pablo Picasso, Jackson Pollock and other luminaries of world contemporary art were shown in Moscow for the first time. Undoubtedly these influenced all the young artists of that period who were eager to raise questions about the meaning of art and the different ways art developed. An important factor that influenced Francisco Infante and the young artists of his circle was his contact with the Greek collector George Costakis, in whose house they could see masterpieces of the Russian avant-garde from the early 20th century. (The Russian avant-garde only began to be shown in the country’s museums in the mid-1980s.)

In 1957 the first artificial earth satellite was launched, and in 1961 the first man, Yuri Gagarin, was sent into space. The space exploration that began at that time became the most important issue, exciting the whole world and not least artists including Lucio Fontana, hence it is no coincidence that Fontana’s retrospective exhibition opens at MAMM simultaneously with the project by Francisco Infante and Nonna Goryunova.

Already in 1962 at the age of nineteen Francisco Infante, a brilliant academic draftsman, starting working on abstraction and geometry, the artistic language that seemed to him the most relevant to express the problems that concerned him, the infinity of space and knowledge of the structure of the universe. (In 1962 he created ‘Birth of the Vertical’, which is the key to understanding his work as a whole.)

His graphics and abstract paintings of the early 1960s break the grid of generally accepted canons of Soviet art. The MAMM exhibition will for the first time show Francisco Infante’s artworks from this period to the fullest extent, including his famous mobile ‘Space–Movement–Infinity’, the artist’s most important creation during his passion for kinetic art. Graphic sketches for this work already appeared in 1963. (One version of the mobile is included in the Centre Pompidou collection.)

Also in 1963 Francisco Infante created the landmark work ‘Reconstruction of the Starry Sky’, lining up stars in the heavens in the shape of Kazimir Malevich’s Suprematist figures. (This work has been exhibited at major world museums such as the Musée d’Orsay, Castello di Rivoli Museum, etc.) Contending with the claims of the Russian avant-garde to the total reconstruction of life, society, each individual and nature itself, Infante articulates another paradigm of artistic consciousness. The Russian avant-garde of the early 20th century dreamed of a volitional reorganisation of the world, and this twenty-year-old artist from a different era, already in the second half of the 20th century, problematised the myth of the infinite power of an individual over others, including nature.

In the subsequent series ‘Artefacts’ and ‘Continuations’, where Francisco Infante and Nonna Goryunova would build installations in natural landscapes, the artists develop the idea of ​​harmonising man and nature. Introducing the artificial objects they created into the natural world, the artists build a total installation. They choose a unique and single point for the shots, which makes it possible to fix the birth of a visual metaphor, an artefact, on film. The artefacts by Francisco Infante and Nonna Goryunova reflect the beauty and harmony that arise as the result of a new kind of relationship between the natural and artificial, where there is no place for domination of one over the other.

Today, when the whole world is discussing environmental issues and contemporary artists compete in creating projects on this topic, the works of Francisco Infante and Nonna Goryunova are becoming especially relevant. The complex, finely devised, precisely constructed and impeccable artefacts that the artists continue to work on today demonstrate what they themselves brought to the title of the MAMM exhibition, namely ‘metaphysics, metaphor and metamorphosis’. Infante said in one of his interviews: ‘The artist creates to overcome the insuperable, for the sake of the divine purpose of man, revealing the secret of the structure of our world, affirming the joy of such a meeting.’

Staying away from ideology and politics, creating a passing context of our being, the work of Francisco Infante is focused on the basic problems of the universe. In order to articulate these problems, which are deeply personal and essential experiences for him and his wife and co-author Nonna Goryunova, he found his own artistic language, which has developed from one project to the next over more than fifty years.

The young Francisco Infante began active artistic work in 1962. Lucio Fontana, one of the most relevant artists of our time whose work is now being rediscovered not only by Italy, but by the whole world, passed away in 1968 and the last period of his oeuvre was one of the most creative and productive. Artists from different countries, different generations, formed in completely different artistic contexts, pose similar questions in their work about the nature and structure of the universe that surrounds us. These fundamental questions are of interest to art and to humanity, which needs art at crucial moments when tectonic civilisational shifts take place in the world. That is why MAMM decided to present the Lucio Fontana retrospective with Francisco Infante and Nonna Goryunova’s exhibition ‘Metaphysics, Metaphor, Metamorphosis’, at the same time and in the same space.

Works by Francisco Infante and Nonna Goryunova are held in the collections of major Russian and world museums, including the Centre Pompidou (France), the Brooklyn Museum (USA), the Basel Museum of Art (Switzerland), the State Tretyakov Gallery, the State Russian Museum, the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, the Moscow Museum of Modern Art, the Multimedia Art Museum, Moscow, etc.

We would like to thank the Garage Museum of Contemporary Art and the State Tretyakov Gallery for providing the works.

Strategic partner of the Museum



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