



Tchoban Foundation
Museum for
Architectural Drawing

Press release

Berlin 1.12.2021

Stalin's Architect: The Rise and Fall of Boris Iofan

Tchoban Foundation. Museum for Architectural Drawing
Christinenstrasse 18a, 10119 Berlin

Exhibition dates: 5 February – 15 May 2022

Opening hours: Mon. – Fri. 2 – 7 p.m., Sat. – Sun. 1 – 5 p.m.

Guided tour for the press: 4 February 2022 at 6 p.m.

Please register at newsletter@tchoban-foundation.de. You will receive a confirmation of the registration.

This exhibition is dedicated to the work of one of the most important Soviet architects, Boris Iofan (1891-1976). 2021 marked the 130th anniversary of his birth. From 1932 to 1947, Iofan was considered a key figure in the architecture of the USSR and Moscow. His proximity to Joseph Stalin made him the “court architect”. Iofan not only brought his own architecture to life during those years; he also implemented the dictator’s architectural visions. Some of these visions were realised in the Soviet pavilions at the 1937 World’s Fairs in Paris and 1939 in New York. In 1937, Iofan entered into direct competition with Albert Speer when the two architects’ respective pavilions were built opposite each other. However, some other visions never made it beyond Iofan’s drawings.

Boris Iofan’s most important work was the design for the gigantic but never built Palace of the Soviets, a skyscraper in the centre of Moscow intended to impress both Soviet citizens and people from all over the world; indeed, they were to be overwhelmed by the sight. This was the Soviet response to American skyscrapers, a response that only gradually reached its



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peak. First, several competitions – both open and by invitation only – were held, from which Iofan emerged as the winner. Then Stalin personally expressed the idea of topping the building off with a gigantic statue of Lenin. The Soviet leader appointed two important Leningrad architects, Vladimir Shchuko and Vladimir Gelfreikh, who often worked together, as co-authors for the palace. The final design of the involuntary trio came about as a result of their joint trips to Italy and the USA; the idea belonged not only to Iofan and the two additional architects, but also to Stalin himself.

Iofan was born in the Russian Empire, studied in Rome and became an Italian architect. He married an aristocrat and joined the Italian Communist Party. Iofan was drawn to Soviet Russia and after Mussolini came to power, he returned to his homeland. He immediately sought out and found proximity to the Soviet government. He made a name for himself with his Neoclassical and then his Constructivist projects, most notably the Government House in Moscow and the Barvikha Sanatorium, near the capital. From the early 1930s, he easily switched from the Constructivist back to the Neoclassical codes, as if understanding the unspoken wishes of both Stalin and his entourage. Thus, the design for the Palace of the Soviets and the subsequent projects of the thirties and forties are in his Neoclassical style – generalised and blurred, grandiose and pompous – which nevertheless adheres to classical tropes. Here we can speak of the architect's own style.

In 1947 Iofan fell out of favour; he wrote to Stalin and other Soviet government officials several times, but received no reply. After the dictator's death, he carried on designing and constructing, though now in Neo-constructivist and International Modernist style, as if continuing his experiments from the second half of the 1920s. The architect believed in communist ideas until the end of his life, and in building the Palace of the Soviets, which he continued to redesign throughout those years, changing its form and style.

The exhibition mostly presents previously unseen original drawings and sketches from the Museum for Architectural Drawing's collection. Only a few are photocopies of drawings



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that have not survived. The exhibition design emphasises the stages of the architect's life and stresses the design of the Palace of the Soviets and projects of this period as the highlight of his career.

DOM Publishers is bringing out a new biography of Boris Iofan to accompany the exhibition, a detailed study of his creative development illustrated by extensive visual material, most of which has not been published before.

Vladimir Sedov is the curator of the exhibition and author of the publication. He is an architectural historian and professor at Moscow State University, where he heads the Department of the History of Russian Art. Sedov is the author of numerous publications on the history of Russian architecture and curator of exhibitions on the history of architectural drawing.

The exhibition design was created by Sergei Tchoban.

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Founded in 2009 by Sergei Tchoban, a passionate draughtsman and collector of architectural drawings, the Tchoban Foundation and its considerable collection serves as a resource for research into the history and nature of architectural drawing. In addition, an extensive reference library with a focus on architectural drawings offers specialists and interested visitors a place to conduct their studies. The prime goal of the foundation is to bring the imaginative and emotionally charged worlds of architectural drawing in the digital age closer to the general public through exhibitions.



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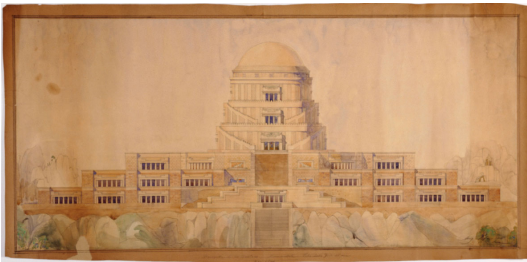
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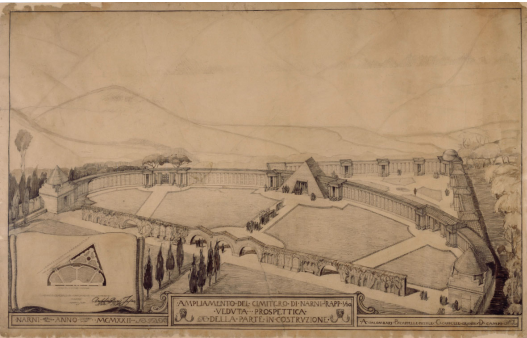
In the case of publication, we kindly request a copy.



Illustrations



1. Design for a memorial (pre-graduation project), front view, 1916, pen, ruling pen, brush, ink, watercolour over a pencil sketch on brown paper, 917 × 1885 mm



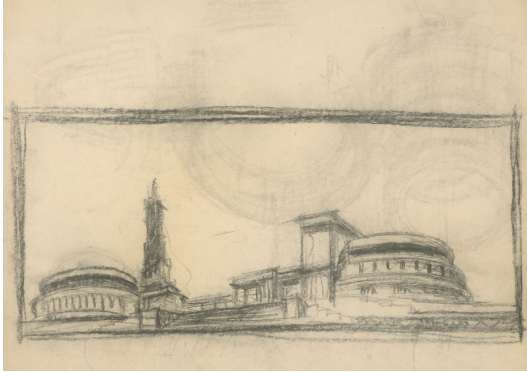
2. Design for an expansion of a cemetery in Narni. Site plan and bird's eye view, 1922, black chalk, watercolour on brown paper, 1072 × 1690 mm



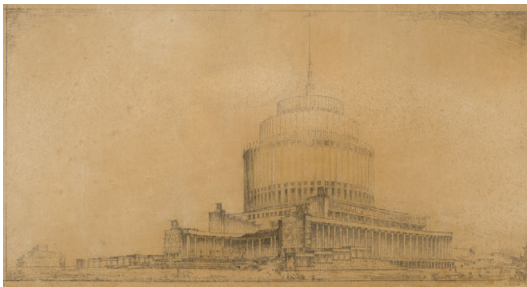
3. Design for the Barvikha sanatorium. Perspective view of a courtyard with part of the building, 1940, watercolour, brush, red chalk on paper, 556 × 416 mm



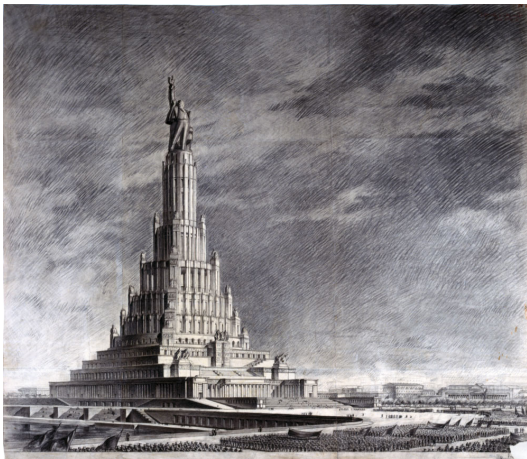
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4. Palace of the Soviets. First open competition. Perspective sketch, 1931, charcoal on paper, 370 × 490 mm



5. Palace of the Soviets. Second closed competition. Perspective, ca. 1932, graphite, lacquer on paper, 330 × 611 mm



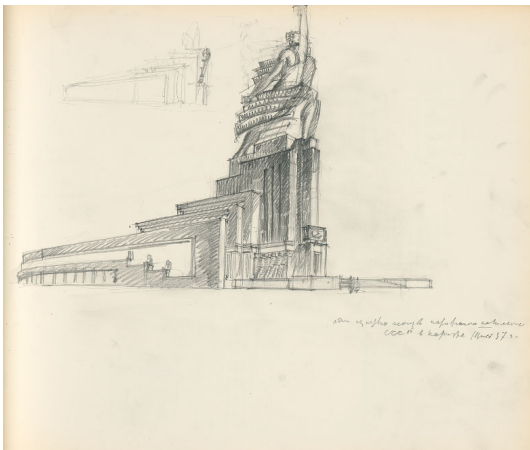
6. Palace of the Soviets. Final version. Perspective view from the Moskva River, 1934, charcoal on paper, 1670 × 1880 mm



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7. Palace of the Soviets. Part of the façade with the statue of Vladimir Lenin, 1947, pen, brush, ink on paper, 1060 × 730 mm



8. Design for the Soviet pavilion at the 1937 Paris World's Fair. One of the first sketches. Perspective view, 1937, pencil on paper, 445 × 555 mm



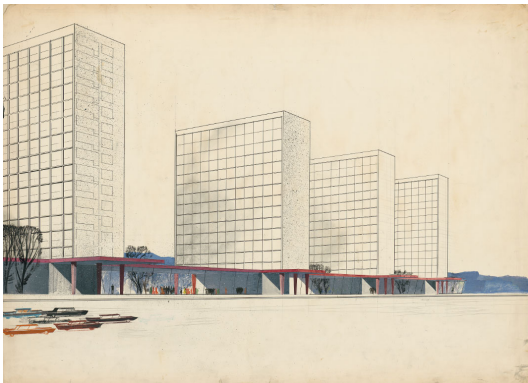
9. Design for the Soviet pavilion at the 1939 New York World's Fair. Perspective, 1938–1939, brush, watercolour, gouache, pencil on paper, 293 × 241 mm



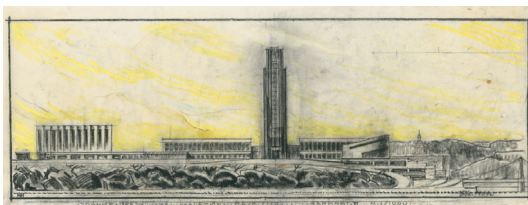
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10. Design for the oxygen laboratory at the Institute for Physical Problems in Moscow. Elevation, 1944, watercolour, pen, brown ink, pencil on paper, 413 × 552 mm



11. Design for the apartment buildings on Shcherbakovskaya Street in Moscow. Perspective, 1962–1969, ruling pen, brush, ink, watercolour, pencil on board, 629 × 870 mm



12. Design for the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Union. Version 2, panoramic view, 1969, charcoal, watercolour on tracing paper, 255 × 584 mm