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PAINTING AND SCULPTURE AT THE AMERICAN NATIONAL EXHIBITION IN MOSCOW, 1959: DEFINING SUCCESS OF A HOT ART SHOW DURING THE COLD WAR

Abstract

Organized by the United States Information Agency, the 1959 American National Exhibition in Moscow, along with consumerist goods from cars to kitchens, introduced contemporary American visual art to millions of Soviet people. By displaying works of abstract artists such as Jackson Pollock, curators sought to showcase freedom of artistic expression in America, which was allegedly unavailable within the framework of Socialist Realism—the only official style in the totalitarian Soviet Union. Exploring diverse novel materials from drafts of the exhibition catalog to original comment books, this essay provides a nuanced account on the curatorial message and the visitors' reception of the art show. Updating dominant narratives on the exhibition, this piece concludes with a discussion of challenges one encounters when evaluating success of the show.

Keywords: American Art, Soviet Union, American National Exhibition in Moscow, 1959, Cultural Politics, Cold War

On July 24, 1959, the *American National Exhibition* in Moscow (ANEM) opened in Sokolniki Park, located in northeast Moscow. This six-hundred-hectare area had no major constructions and was suited perfectly for creating a special exhibiting environment. The United States Information Agency (USIA)—a major American official institution in charge of international public policy—organized the show. USIA officer Jack Masey headed the design group, which consisted of recognized architects and designers, among them Buckminster Fuller, George Nelson, and Charles and Ray Eames. The US site in Sokolniki occupied 3.7

ha, where American engineers, supervising Soviet workers, erected the following buildings:

- 1) a Geodesic Dome¹ of 30,000 square feet;
- 2) a 50,000-square-foot Glass Pavilion; and
- 3) three plastic “umbrella” pavilions covering 15,000 square feet.

During the show, the buildings were property of the United States, but upon the closure of the exhibition, the USSR purchased the Dome and the Glass Pavilion for half price, i.e. \$375,000. Although these American buildings passed into Soviet possession, they would remain a prominent architectural spot within the Moscow cityscape, a reminder of the 1959 cultural contact.² It was a unique precedent during the Cold War that Soviet officials gave an American institution permission to occupy such a large territory, just five miles from the Red Square, and to erect several great buildings to display American culture right in the Soviet capital. Why did the Soviets give the Americans such freedom?

Soviet motivation was its eagerness for cultural exchange, a consequence of the Thaw, initiated by Nikita Khrushchev. In addition to declaring peaceful intentions, Khrushchev had a particular pragmatic motivation to become acquainted with technological achievements in the West and to stimulate trade.³ Masey argues that Khrushchev himself initiated the exchange when, in 1957 during an interview on CBS's *Face the Nation*, the First Secretary appealed to the United States and invited the country to engage in academic, scientific, and cultural exchanges.⁴ His initiative was further legitimized with the Lacy-Zarubin agreement of January 27, 1958, which became the framework for American-Soviet reciprocal cultural exchange, including the ANEM and the reciprocal Soviet exhibition in New York.

Lengthy negotiations preceded the two exhibitions. The American side offered for the Soviet exhibition a convenient New York exhibition space, the Coliseum; and the Soviet side could not offer an equally suitable venue, most likely because such ones were not available in Moscow. The Soviet side proposed Gorky Park, but the site did not satisfy the Americans because the facilities were not adequate for large exhibitions. The stairs at the buildings in the park were not able to bear the weight of the anticipated crowds. Finally, the Soviet side offered Sokolniki Park, where Americans could construct the necessary buildings on their own. The Americans accepted this offer because they immediately acknowledged the benefits of creating an exhibiting environment from scratch.⁵ On December 29,

1958, an American-Soviet agreement, outlining the details of the Moscow and New York exhibitions, was reached.

The American side took maximum advantage of the given opportunities. Creating an exhibition environment from scratch, the design group attempted to represent “a realistic and credible image of America to the Soviets through exhibits, displays, films, publications, fine arts, performing arts. . . . In a sense this . . . [was] a ‘corner of America’ in the heart of Moscow.”⁶ The displays of thousands of American goods from furniture to books, events such as jazz concerts and fashion shows, and the engagement of seventy-five Russian-speaking American guides contributed to the overall credibility of this simulation of America, which was to be very much appreciated by the Soviet visitors, who left hundreds of comments in comment books, among them such as: *I have been to America!*

This bridge-building act was shaped as a peaceful undertaking with the officially declared goal to increase a mutual understanding between the people.⁷ However, this narrative of friendship concealed a concrete covert mission. Unlike official releases and catalogs, the secret internal documents of the USIA clearly state this subversive intention. The declassified *Basic Policy Guidance for the U.S. Exhibit* reveals the show’s primary theme was to promote freedom of choice and expression.⁸ The representation of numerous goods unavailable to the Soviet people was to provoke implicit criticism of the Soviet regime.⁹ The show prompted the Soviet people to compare the highly developed consumerist culture and people’s capitalism in the United States with their lives under socialism. The outcomes of this forced comparison are still disputable,¹⁰ but there is a general assertion in the historiography of the ANEM that the intended contrast of the ANEM with Soviet “black-and-white” daily prose was achieved. Irma Weinig, one of the guides at the show, recalls:

[T]he exhibition was a *carnival*: the most *colorful spot* in Moscow. Usually deadly serious and law-abiding, living in a world of clearly marked ‘don’ts’ and ‘do not touch’s,’ they were free to follow their own bent at the exhibit.¹¹ [*Italics-mine*]

In this paper, I will explore the crucial role American visual art played in establishing this contrast. Whereas the basic history of assembling and displaying art at the ANEM is known,¹² novel sources such as drafts of the exhibition catalog allow shedding new light on the curatorial

message embodied in the art section. Furthermore, analyzing the recently discovered original comment books, I will provide a nuanced account of the Soviet reception of American art. In doing this, I will challenge the adequacy of the binary opposition *favorable/unfavorable* as a framework for an analysis of Soviet people's responses to the ANEM art section. My ultimate goal is to expand the dominant narrative on the ANEM, which treats the art section as an 'ideological subversion.'¹³ Uncovering how American curators applied specific representational techniques to reach specific target audiences in the Soviet Union, I will provide a comprehensive analysis of the goals, failures, and achievements of the 1959 art exhibition.

Assembling Art

Through internal USIA correspondence, Robert Sivard acknowledged the importance of the art section:

The Cultural section will be one of the most important sections of the show, and the one offering the most challenge and opportunity if done correctly. It is never too hard to sell the high standard of American production . . . or standard-of-living. . . . [The Soviet Citizen] is less convinced, however, that America has any culture. . . . [T]he exhibition could go toward convincing him. . . . Intellectual ferment in the Soviet Union centers primarily around a resistance against the oppressive bonds of Socialist Realism. . . . Together with presenting a wide selection of American talent in the cultural field, the entire exhibition should be designed to emphasize freedom of choice and expression in America. This is the most important thing we have which the Soviet citizen is denied, and, as he becomes better educated, increasingly resents denied. In the cultural section, we should point out, just as we should do in the section showing consumer's goods, the wide range of choice which the American 'consumer' had at this disposal. . . . [W]e should suggest the showing of a good exhibition of contemporary American art, which clearly shows the evolution from realism through impressionism, expressionism to abstractionism and surrealism.¹⁴

In order to assemble the art works for the ANEM, the USIA hired a non-governmental commission of professionals from the field of the visual arts, which was headed by Franklin C. Watkins, a painting teacher at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. The jury included Henry R.

Rope, chair of the Fine Arts Department of Indiana University; Theodore Roszak, a sculptor; and Lloyd Goodrich, Director of the Whitney Museum of American Art.¹⁵ The jury selected forty-nine paintings by twentieth-century contemporary artists, from William Glackens' figurative *Soda Fountain* (1938) to Jackson Pollock's abstract canvas *Cathedral* (1947). The display of this collection occupied four cubicles on the second floor of the Glass Pavilion. Twenty-three contemporary sculptures by Gaston Lachaise, Jacques Lipchitz, and other sculptors were placed both in the pavilion and outside in the park.

Edith Halpert, a US dealer of Russian origin and a curator from Downtown Gallery, New York City, traveled to Moscow on her own expense to hang the collection. She served as acting curator and stayed in the USSR for more than three weeks. Upon her arrival, she found the working conditions extremely inappropriate, observing, "[T]he space seemed so inadequate that I was on the verge of tears."¹⁶ The lighting was poor, and the walls were painted in green, orange, and purple, casting a "terrible light"¹⁷ onto the pictures. It took her four days and required the assistance of six preparers from the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts to prepare an adequate environment and hang the collection.

The assembled collection of contemporary art did not escape in-house criticism, which was rather typical for US art exhibitions since the late 1940s. The art section provoked a considerable domestic controversy because the jury's choice had been subject to criticism by the House Un-American Activities Committee. Since many artists such as Pollock and Shahn had formerly had affiliations with communist or socialist organizations, they were treated as subversives.¹⁸ Moreover, the assembled collection consisted only of works of contemporary art. American eighteenth- and nineteenth-century paintings were missing, it was therefore argued that such an exhibition would not be representative of American art. The congressional hearings on the ANEM art section took place on July 1, 1959. However, unlike similar previous cases, and thanks to Eisenhower's personal involvement, none of the works was removed. Instead, an additional group of twenty-eight paintings of realist pre-World War I art were sent to Moscow. This collection of works by John Singleton Copley, Maurice Prendergast, and others was displayed on the first floor of the Glass Pavilion.

Altogether, one hundred works of American art, covering American art history from the eighteenth to the mid-twentieth century, were on display. This was a milestone in the representation of American art in the

USSR, particularly if one considers that, with the exception of figurative art such as by Rockwell Kent and a few other artists, American art had hardly been shown in the USSR by 1959.¹⁹ As a part of the *American National Exhibition in Moscow*, which displayed thousands of items and attracted hundreds of thousands of people, the art section was guaranteed to be well attended. Thus, the art section of the ANEM was an excellent opportunity to deliver a particular perspective on American art to a larger Soviet audience that was practically unaware of it, especially of American modernist art.

Freedom, Diversity, and Peoples' Art on Display

The art exhibition within the ANEM was titled *Contemporary American Art*, and it was a curated show with a specific concept, as can be seen in the catalog and the brochure issued for the show.²⁰ The high-quality ninety-page catalog, edited by Halpert and published with funds raised by the Archives of American Art, included a ten-page introductory text by Lloyd Goodrich and a reproduction of each work exhibited along with a biographical summary and brief comment on each artist's style, written by Halpert.²¹ Most of the reproductions were in black and white, but selected works, among them Jackson Pollock's *Cathedral* (1947) and Yasuo Kuniyoshi's *The Amazing Juggler* (1952) were reproduced as color plates. A smaller version of the catalog, a fourteen-page brochure titled *Contemporary American Art*, including Goodrich's text and several black and white reproductions, was also published.²² This edition included reproductions of only few representational works, most likely because the quality and the size of the publication were by no means adequate for reproducing abstract art.

The catalogs and the brochures were distributed among the visitors. Gretchen Simms, in her PhD thesis dedicated to the artistic reception of the ANEM in the USSR, notes that some 400,000 art catalogs were issued for the show,²³ and the circulation of the brochure is not known. Thus, considering an estimated attendance of around three million people, every seventh visitor would have received a copy.²⁴ Everyone who received a catalog or a brochure would take it home, and most likely, he or she would show it to friends and acquaintances who had not attended the show, thus increasing the number of Soviet people who became acquainted with American art. Like other objects from the ANEM, the catalogs and

brochures would undergo preservation²⁵ and remain in the USSR after the show, thus becoming a valuable source of visual information about American art, which had previously been practically unavailable.

Another factor that contributed to the significance of the catalogs and the brochures was that they included a study of American art that went beyond Marxist-Leninist aesthetics. Thus, a Soviet citizen could look at American art not through the lens of official Soviet negative criticism, but through an article by an American art historian, who delivered his argument with a comparatively low level of distortion because his text was not subject to Soviet censorship. Let us have a closer look at how Goodrich represented American art to a Soviet audience.

The Russian text of the Moscow catalog was not written specially for the ANEM, but a revised version of Goodrich's earlier article "What is American in American Art?"²⁶ published in *Art in America* in 1958. In the summer of 1959, an English version of the text, now revised for the ANEM, was published in *College Art Journal*.²⁷ This article was translated into Russian and then printed in the Russian catalog. In 1963, Goodrich would republish his essay "What is American in American Art?" in *Art in America*.²⁸ Comparing several versions of the text to understand whether Goodrich was consciously adapting his text when writing for a Soviet audience.

The 1958 text from *Art in America* is significantly longer than the consequent versions prepared for the ANEM, it also covers a larger time period: from colonialism to contemporary times, whereas the editions for the ANEM focus mainly on twentieth-century movements. The reasons for omitting the historical part become evident when considering the jury, which wanted to show the Soviet people a cross section of the best works of contemporary art, representing various trends in twentieth-century American art.²⁹

In the opening paragraph of his Russian-language article, Goodrich argues that twentieth-century contemporary American art is a reaction against idealism and academism in the arts, which led artists such as John Sloan or William Glackens to focusing on the social life in the United States.³⁰ He also emphasizes that numerous artists, from Thomas Hart Benton and Grant Wood to Edward Hopper and Raphael Soyer, were committed to socially critical art.³¹ He furthermore emphasizes that during the Depression era, the Federal Art Project helped many artists by providing them with commissions. Goodrich argues that this activity was entirely socialist because it was an example of the official state

support of the arts in the United States. Throughout the article, Goodrich outlines that there is a particular social aspect in the art of Ben Shahn, Edward Hopper, Jack Levine, and others, and that these artists, within their oeuvre, were concerned with commenting on the social life in the United States. It becomes evident Goodrich was emphasizing whatever *social* there was about American art. Goodrich knew that within Soviet aesthetics, “genuine” art was socially engaged art, it focused on peoples’ lives and was supported by the state and; it was socially critical. Thus, the main strategy was to emphasize similarities between American and Soviet art – a strategy Goodrich followed throughout the article. This strategy of finding commonalities rather than focusing on differences was more adequate for the general idea of the show as a step towards understanding and friendship.

On pages three and four of the Russian-language text, Goodrich introduces modernism. He stresses the contribution of American to the avant-garde movements, and presents American modernism as a successor of European modernism, thus inscribing the United States into the great European tradition. According to Goodrich, artists such as Max Weber, Morris Prendergast, and Joseph Stella significantly contributed to world art. He provides an overview of expressionist art, arguing that discoveries in psychology, such as the discovery of the unconscious mind, showed and opened up new “worlds” and turned the artists’ attention away from portraying the “objective world.” Gorky and Kuniyoshi are presented as influential examples of this trend, since, as Goodrich puts it, these artists began to pay less attention to the “objective world.”

In the following, Goodrich argues that abstraction has become the dominating trend since 1930. He provides a “formalist” definition of abstraction, characterizing it as discarding representation in order to just work with form, color, and language. In his history of American art, he then moves on to American Abstract Expressionism, which became the first world-recognized style of American origin. He concluded his account with Hopper and Wyeth, whom he portrays as contemporary “creative” realists who managed to rethink academism. Goodrich’s variant of the history of American art is followed by a resume stating that American art is rather diverse:

What with representationalism, expressionism, abstraction, and all their variations, contemporary American art is among the most diversified of any nation. . . . We have individuals and whole schools of many

differing viewpoints, all having their measure of validity. This pluralistic character of American art gives the full freedom for individualism and experimentation.³²

According to Goodrich, diversity is an essential trait of American art. He argues that diversity is possible due to the freedom given to artists who can work in any style, be it abstract or figurative. In fact, Goodrich proposes a contrasting scheme according to which realism could co-exist with abstraction within one national art; such a perspective contradicted Soviet ideas of the struggle between realist and not-realist art.

This 1959 Russian text, unlike the English version of the same year, has one extra passage. In this passage, Goodrich claims that there exist various kinds of support for modernism in the United States. He highlights that the people's interest in contemporary modernist art has increased and "contemporary art in the United States receives significant support from various sides."³³ Evidently, this passage about the broad acceptance of modernism in the United States was designed especially for the Soviet readers: they were used to judge art based on its popularity among the people because popular response to art was an important parameter in socialism. Goodrich wanted to show that in the United States, contemporary art, including the displayed at the ANEM modernist works, is the art of the people, not something elitist. Placed at the end of the article and functioning as a second conclusion, this passage provides important evidence on how Goodrich wanted to advance American art among the Soviet people. The latter assumption can be proved once more when comparing the 1959 Russian text with the first 1958 and the last 1963 versions. Ironically, in the English articles written and produced for Americans audiences in *Art in America*, Goodrich makes an opposite claim, there he argues that contemporary art in the United States lacks support:

[O]ur art is still individualistic, produced for private collectors, museums and the art public, with a minimum of official patronage. Whatever vital art is being done is mostly for business and industry.³⁴

The text's rhetoric and revisions show that Goodrich considered the specifics of the Soviet audience and wanted American art to be well received. Attempting to explain modernism, he avoided a possible discussion that might have treated it as idealistic and bourgeois. Instead

he came up with arguments about the similarities between art in the United States and in the USSR. Goodrich also wanted to convince the Soviet audience that the American public was supporting contemporary American art such as on display at the ANEM, including abstract art.

Anticipating the reception of American modernism in the USSR, Goodrich was definitely aware of the general hostile attitude of Soviet art criticism to modernist movements. Since 1932, Socialist Realism was the only acceptable contemporary style in the Soviet Union, and critics accordingly denounced all modernist styles. Goodrich acknowledged this fact and wanted to facilitate Soviet people's reception of American modernism. Thus, unlike in his articles for *Art in America*, he found some parallels between abstract works of art and figurative pieces in the Russian text. He argued that the large canvases of American the abstract expressionists looked like landscapes seen from a bird's eye view, reflecting the "openness and space of America."³⁵ And when speaking about the Morris Graves' expressionistic work *Flight of a Plover*, Goodrich argued that the painting depicts a flock of birds in motion.³⁶ Since the Soviet audience was experienced only in viewing realist art, Goodrich was trying to use it. Such a simplified, naïve, and accessible explanation of contemporary art targeted an average visitor with an anticipated lack of expertise in modernism.

However, the anticipation of a general low level of readiness to encounter American contemporary art among Soviet visitors does not mean that the curators approached their potential audience as a monolithic group. They were conscious that the actual audience of the so-called "classless society" was rather uneven and also included some people who were interested in the visual arts and more ready for modernism. In fact, the curators had an ambiguous approach to the audience. Although the curators undeniably wanted to find a common language with the general public, basically lacking expertise in modernist art, the curators' priority was to introduce contemporary art to the cultural elites. For example, Halpert's lecture and McLanahan's report show that the curators considered the intelligentsia and the cultural establishment as a key audience, more ready for an encounter with modernist art. Advancing the American art within the intelligentsia was strongly desired, the curators even changed the exhibition's daily schedule to satisfy the interests of Soviet artists by providing them with a better access to contemporary American art. One of the measures to do that was to close the gallery from 1–3 p.m. and open it only to artists. By doing this, Halpert wanted to prevent overcrowding of the

art section. The groups were not to exceed two hundred people, and “the Soviet uniformed guards did the screening.”³⁷ People from such groups were handed out the large catalogs that “were intended only for those having a special interest in the arts, which, because of its handsome design, typography, and reproductions was much sought after.”³⁸ Whereas the small brochures were given to most of the visitors, the large, well-printed publication “reached those for who they were specifically intended.”³⁹ To acquire such a catalog, one had to provide a name and an address, so the catalog could be sent by mail. This procedure was to prevent jams of people willing to get a catalog. Also, by sending catalogs directly to concrete people, the organizers sought to prevent the Soviet agitators from having catalogs: the Americans knew that the agitators would get the catalog just to prevent someone else from having it. Eventually, the Soviet authorities prohibited this procedure, and regardless of the American attempts to restore the distribution of the catalogs, many people apparently did not receive a catalog.

This focus on people with a specific interest in the arts went along with the overall USIA public policy on conceptualizing the target audience as a pyramid, with the intellectuals on the top.⁴⁰ Although the USIA attempted to influence a wide audience, there was always a particular focus on the intellectual and cultural elites. The intelligentsia were important to reach because, firstly, they could potentially be more loyal to Western ideas, and, secondly, they could be among the agenda-makers within the USSR: they could potentially influence the mindset in the USSR.

Thus, the art section of the ANEM communicated to both to the general audience and to those potentially more open to contemporary American art the message that contemporary American art was individualistic, pluralistic, socially accepted, and in some ways also socially critical. What were the visitors’ reactions?

Reception and Response

The art exhibition was an extremely popular site, with daily attendance measuring in tens of thousands of visitors, coming up to one million in the end.⁴¹ Due to the jams created by the crowd at the art section on the second floor, Halpert had to set up special rails preventing people from being pushed into the canvases. The official Soviet reception of the show was predictably negative, with numerous articles denouncing the exhibition.

The reviews of the art section were not exempt from hostility. The best example is Kemenov's lengthy overview, "Vystavka sovremennogo iskusstva" ("Exhibition of Contemporary Art"), published in the August 11, 1959, issue of *Sovetskaia Kul'tura*, which parroted traditional negative Marxist-Leninist attitudes towards modernism.

However, the reception should not be assessed by official publications only. Although each source has its limitations, other materials such as comment books, reports of the USIA, recollections, and other forms nevertheless allow for the reconstruction of a detailed account of the responses provoked by the ANEM.

Comment Books

The responses in the comment books were more diverse than the reception in the official newspapers, albeit still with few positive comments against a dominating negative trend. However, the classification and interpretation of comments from the books is a challenge as has already been acknowledged within Cold War studies.⁴²

First, the credibility of the comment books is problematic; it is an open question how adequately the books reflect the Soviet people's attitudes towards the exhibition. The Soviet side influenced the account by sending special agitators to leave "fake" negative comments. Moreover, specially prepared Soviet affiliates stood near the comment books, and their presence provided psychological pressure on visitors willing to leave positive comments. In practice, someone caught leaving a good comment might have encountered further career problems. Spying on "loyal" commentators made visitors suspicious of commenting, and this minimized positive responses. The last page of *Comment Book One*, located at the exit of the ANEM, is valuable proof that positive commentary was a challenge. One can see that a piece of paper was glued onto the book's last page. The text praises American culture and points at the supremacy of capitalism over communism. Most likely, such an "anti-Soviet" comment had been written in advance and had been given to an American guide, thus bypassing Soviet controllers.

Second, comments examined by previous scholars are actually not a "pure" primary source: they are not the original comment books but excerpts. Moreover, most of the comments are translations from Russian into English. Thus, the representativeness of the available NARA II and AAA separate lists, compilations, and other materials has been compromised

by the very fact of their selections by USIA officers (we do not really know the parameters of the selection). Furthermore, one should not ignore the inevitable losses in translation.⁴³

Third, the lists are unreliable in terms of figures because it is impossible to acquire credible statistics from a translated selection and with no access to the complete, original books. The available statistics, created by the USIA, state that art was the second popular subject of commentary, with 7 favorable and 37 (with an additional 5 commentaries regarding sculptures) as unfavorable.⁴⁴ Obviously, these numbers come from an analysis of a translated, selected set of comments, not from the original books, because 49 written comments are a small number for a six-week show with several million visitors.

Last but not least, the commentators' social status is hard to determine and interpret statistically because most comments were unsigned, except few comments signed to identify the author as a "worker" or an "artist." Although it is possible in some cases to speculate on the authorship of unsigned comments depending on the spelling, punctuation, and style of the argumentation, nevertheless, attribution of comments is not available to an extent to make any credible statistics. However, thanks to the efforts of Dr. Aleksei Fominykh,⁴⁵ who retrieved the four original books,⁴⁶ it is now possible to provide some further insights into the visitors' reactions, giving a more detailed account and overcoming some of the difficulties scholars have encountered.

The four discovered books are more credible and a pure source of information. The books were placed at the show's exit⁴⁷ only on the fourth day. The organizers anticipated that the first visitors would be privileged ones, i.e. the Party establishment and not average Soviet citizens. Indeed, officials controlled the distribution of tickets, so well-established people received them first. A guide at the ANEM, John R. Thomas, reported on the first visitors:

In the first week of the Fair, the visitors were heavily weighted on the elite side starting with Khrushchev and Kozlov. This was evident (1) from their dress (among the men many good-quality, pressed suits and white shirts and ties, among the women many tailored suits and fur pieces); (2) from their language (more refined and educated); (3) from other external signs (many sported Orders of Lenin and Red Flag insignias with inscriptions denoting Supreme Soviet deputies); and (4) from the general hostility with which questions were asked and answers received.⁴⁸

Reactions from such privileged visitors were more representative of the Party line than those of the common people; hence, bypassing some of the political elite's comments, the four books are closer to the actual reception of the Soviet people.⁴⁹

The books also provide us with new firsthand quantitative data. Within five weeks, the four books accumulated 1,454 comments (277; 383; 479; 315).⁵⁰ Commentators shared impressions on various aspects of the show, from management to architecture, and 112 comments mention the visual arts.⁵¹ Only 16 comments openly express sympathy for American art. Most of the remaining comments are explicitly negative; and only several comments are neutral because they contain no positive or negative judgment.

Negative Receptions

Negative commentary of art should not be seen as monolithic, and the reader should be skeptical towards the frame *favorable/unfavorable* when speaking about aesthetical judgments. The illustration for the newspaper article regarding the ANEM⁵² evidences that *unfavorable* is rather an umbrella term for several different reactions to be specified. One can see a collage of visitors' photos, which belts the three modernist sculptures from the ANEM. The heading says "The Room of Laughter." That was a popular Soviet attraction where false mirrors distorted a visitor's image, thus making him or her appear to be laughing or scared, depending on the character of distortion. American visual art, like a false mirror, distorted the image, provoking various emotions of anger, surprise, fear, disgust, incomprehension, and other. All photographed reactions can be interpreted as *unfavorable* and the comment books likewise evidence the same diversity of *unfavorable* responses. Let us now focus on the most widespread reactions and patterns of criticism.

Of all the sections of the ANEM, the art section was most frequently denounced. Dozens of commentators emphasized *the only thing (they) disliked* was art. One even compared art *with a toothache in a healthy organism*. Attempting to get a fair overview of the show, visitors wanted to put onto paper their thoughts about both good and bad things to seem objective, and art was commonly said to be the worst part of the ANEM. (Indeed, without vulnerable and provocative art, what could be criticized that easily?) Thirty-seven comments were built upon a contradistinction of the art section to the rest. Such comments reproduced the following

scheme: *I liked/it was great (especially autos), but I disliked art.* For example:

I liked the show very much. Especially autos, household items, and many other things. But your abstract paintings provoke indignation among the majority of visitors. They are not resistant to any criticism. In our understanding, this is extinction [degeneration] of genuine art. And these paintings can be named slapdash. 1/VIII-1959 visitor

Ugly art and beautiful cars were the extremes well grasped by one commentator, who ironically suggested Henry Ford to be elected the President of the Academy of Arts of the United States because Ford, unlike American artists, knew what real beauty was.

The next frequent complaint was that the art works exhibited were not understandable. Not understanding was typical of the overall reception, and not accidentally, Halpert titled her lecture on ANEM as “Chto Eto?”⁵³ At least 22 commentators put it in similar terms as the following one shows:

I have learnt a lot about the life of talented American people having visited this wonderful exhibition. The only thing which produced not too pleasant an effect on me is the section of contemporary American art; it might be that I just do not understand this type of painting. 9.08.1959

This comment is an example of a negative/unfavorable reception because the visitor disliked the art: it produced a “not too pleasant effect.” However, not understanding was not always “negative.” Not all who did not understand art argued it was bad. For example, three commentators claimed *I do not understand art, but I regret this; I wish I could:*

We do not understand abstract art: painting, sculpture. It is hard to understand what an artist wanted to depict. This is also because there is no Russian translation. I wanted very much to learn what abstract art is, what drives abstract artists. . . . [I]t is hard to understand it; that is why it is not surprising that many visitors of the show are very harsh towards it. . . . [W]hy none of the guides could explain it. . . . [I]f organizers wished . . . they could have done more. 14.08.1959

The curators anticipated such troubles of the Soviet people’s encounter with modernism, and they tried to prevent the cognitive dissonance

caused by the lack of an appropriate framework for interpreting abstract art not only by issuing catalogs. For example, Halpert, acting as on-site curator, also tried to soften the Soviet encounter with abstraction. She hung paintings chronologically, from the early 1928 works by William Benton to the later 1958 works by Conrad Marca-Relli, to show some progression. She also interspersed abstract works with figurative ones, so the former would be less striking than if put all together.⁵⁴ After opening the show and receiving multiple complaints about not understanding, Halpert started writing special explanatory labels on specific works of art, and Richard McLanathan eventually started taking over this activity. During the first days of the show, Halpert was giving lectures and answering visitors' questions. The guides turned out to be poorly trained to explain this art (this was also a frequent comment), and during lunch times, McLanathan would instruct them on how to comment on the art.⁵⁵ Moreover, special audio lectures and comments on art were recorded; they were played several times a day for the visitors.⁵⁶ Finally, a series of fifteen-minute explanatory videos on the exhibited works were recorded. The video itself became a great attraction because it was shown on a color television, which was a curiosity in that time.⁵⁷ However, the Soviet reaction to art should not be analyzed by only focusing on the second floor collection and on the activities that took place there.

Insulting Sculpture

Contemporary historiography tends to present art at the ANEM as a collection of paintings, which abstract artists such as Pollock and Rothko dominated. One should not forget the significant collection of twenty-three sculptures on display. Comment books indicate the sculptures were, in some sense, even more provocative than abstract paintings. The sculptures were not only one of the most disliked aspects but also one of the most *insulting* counterparts of the show. We have sixteen negative comments versus one positive comment mentioning sculptures. Here is a typical example:

I do not understand why they show not the beauty, not the grace but the ugliness in the United States? The sculptures motherhood [*Mother and Child* by Lipchitz], woman [*Standing Woman* by Lachaise] and stepping woman [*Walking Figure* by Hugo Robus (1957)] [indecipherable handwriting] – simply offends, insults all women of the world. 30.08.1959

Or,

And one more thing: do you really think that woman deserves such a deriding (glooming) which you show in your sculptures. 7.7.1959 (sic!)

The sculptures' negative attainment was due to the following reasons. First, many sculptures were located outside, and therefore, they were seen by most of the visitors arbitrarily when visiting the ANEM. Second, modernist sculptures such as *Standing Woman* were, in some sense, even a harder violation of "reality" than abstract painting. Abstraction did not really distort the image: Pollock and Rothko did not represent reality but constructed a new one. However, the sculptures "distorted" real prototypes. Paintings broke aesthetic taboos and sculptures of nudes broke certain social and ethical taboos as well as aesthetic ones. The nude body shocked just because of the nudity; moreover, the clothes that should have concealed the beauty were absent, revealing ugliness. Precisely, the sculptures of women at the ANEM insulted the concept of femininity, as it was treated in Soviet culture.⁵⁸

Thus, it becomes clear now why people literally felt indignation (five comments). They were insulted (four comments) by the sculptures that violated not only aesthetical feelings but also ethical taboos. This violation was so strong that it caused much discomfort, making the Soviet visitors uncomfortable with the sculptures, with many commentators asking to have the sculptures removed and not brought back.

Similarly, there were also several requests to remove abstract paintings. Such requests were accompanied by many of the anti-modernist topoi such as art of the insane (five comments), degenerate art (three comments), low-skilled painters (four comments), and other aspects.

Any Good?

Positive comments in the four original comment books were few, but sometimes unexpectedly grand:

In general, I liked the exhibition. It mirrors all the styles, shows the diversity of existing trends in the field of sculpture. I liked the group *Family of the Miner* by Meant Garkovi. This is good in its realism, truthfulness of images, wholeness of the sculpture. Sculpture *Mother and Child* by Jacques Lipchitz is wonderful. This is a very original and mighty monument. Here, everything

has been simplified in the name of the most important. Very expressive, very talking. Also I liked one sculpture—I draw it because there is no tag. A particular mood whiffles from this abstractionist piece; it is well executed, very whole. Finally, I liked, although less, *Adam and Eve* by B. Reider. This seems to be not just a subject from the Bible (or from somewhere else, I do not know for sure) but to be a personification of the “tree of life.” However, this is my personal reception.

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Student of historical faculty⁵⁹

The few positive commentaries in the comment books are only partially indicative of the overall response. In numerous recollections and reports of the show, it is put that frequently, positive comments on art were oral.⁶⁰ Such reactions were especially frequent in conversations with the guides and during the special gallery hours established by Halpert from 1–3 p.m. when only artists were invited. Halpert created a special situation in which people ready for encountering contemporary American art felt free to discuss it and were not afraid to talk about it like they were afraid of leaving comments in the visitors’ book; these discussions would frequently continue in her hotel or in their homes. That may have been the time when the intelligentsia, which had been targeted by the show, would be able to share most freely its thoughts on art and instead of denouncing it. With this variety of responses and reactions to the art, how can one ultimately estimate whether the show was a success?

What Was It?

For the curators, art at the ANEM was an unquestionable success. In his report to Sivard, McLanathan puts it as follows:

The Art Exhibit at the American National Exhibition in Moscow proved to be an especially important part of the whole because the paintings and sculpture(s) provided the most obvious demonstration in the Fair is freedom of expression of choice in America, and the very strangeness to the Russians of some of the more abstract art merely served to emphasize this further. In this the art exhibit was more effective even than the book exhibit.⁶¹

He then argues that the message about freedom in art was well received:

The art exhibition as a dramatic proof of freedom of expression and of choice in America, seemed to be a widely understood and accepted than I could ever have expected. The idea of the great variety of the works shown representing the vitality of American art also seemed to find ready acceptance.⁶²

Finally, refraining from approaching the reception as negative or positive, let us instead preserve a critical distance to the curator's report and try to figure out whether the central message of the show—the idea of a diverse, and hence, free art—was received, as McLanathan argues. My analysis of the four books shows this key message was hardly acknowledged. Only two of several thousand commentators mentioned the diversity and freedom in contemporary American visual art. For most commentators, the whole art section appeared as a show of abstract art, despite the large percentage of various artistic styles on display, i.e., many figurative styles such as Regionalism, Expressionism, Precisionism, etc. Abstract paintings overshadowed the others; the figurative art on the second floor practically went unnoticed, although it hung alongside abstract works. Only a single commentator praised Andrew Wyeth's portrait *Children's Doctor* (1949); and surprisingly, several comments praised Peter Blume's surrealist *Eternal City* (1937), which social anti-fascist agenda overshadowed the painting's modernist style. As for the first floor section with ten realist works by George Caleb Bingham, Childe Hassam, John Singer Sargent, and others—something that must have attracted the Soviet people—it seems to have remained absent from collective memory. Nevertheless, simultaneously, McLanathan's account is not completely false. Indeed, one should not neglect that those who did not leave their written comments but talked to the ANEM staff may have received the ideas of freedom in art. However, generally, the idea was rather overlooked.

What about the general mission of American art to conquer the myth of the United States as a soulless nation? Did the show prove to the audience that Americans were "cultured?" Halpert believes it did because "[t]his show had proved in part that our civilization is not entirely materialistic but that culture holds an important place."⁶³

However, Reid in her analysis of the show puts it that the "art exhibition at ANEM did nothing to mitigate the widespread prejudice that the United States was vulgar, lacking in taste and culture."⁶⁴ With the dominance of negative commentaries in the comment books, Reid's conclusion looks to

be stronger than Halpert's account. Moreover, one should be skeptical of the curators' reports because the authors were naturally prejudiced. Both Halpert and McLanathan were involved in the show and were therefore responsible for its success. Hence, they always had considerable motives to exaggerate the achievements and disregard the failures. Their motives were even stronger because as curators they were under certain pressure in the United States, where American art abroad programs received constant criticism. To some extent, the future of overseas exhibitions and legitimacy of censorship and intrusions depended on the success of the ANEM. With this in mind, enthusiastic reports by Halpert and McLanathan are no surprise.

Nevertheless, the art section should be treated as a success within the ANEM, mainly due to the considerable publicity it received. The dominating negative trend in the reception hardly compromises the show's success. Vice versa, the 'hotness' was a major attraction; it was the reason for its success. Controversial art pushed visitors to react to the show; abstract paintings and modernist sculptures provoked questions, encouraging interaction between Soviet visitors and American guides. Art also triggered harsh disputes between the Soviet visitors who would disagree over abstraction during conversations at the ANEM. Furthermore, even in the comment books, a visitor would comment upon a previous writer's negative or positive commentary on the art; crossed out, the commentators would call each other idiots and other names. Thus, American contemporary art, radically contrasting Soviet art, was challenging the taste of the majority who still disliked it. Simultaneously, contemporary art definitely found a few fans among the cultural intelligentsia who were more ready for modernism.⁶⁵

Last but not least, a crucial reason to treat the show as a success was that for the USIA, the ANEM was a good lesson in organizing overseas exhibitions. The show clearly revealed the potential pros and cons of exhibiting modernism in the USSR. Consequently, the ANEM's positive and negative experiences were considered within other exhibitions, such as *Graphic Arts: USA*, to open in 1963.

NOTES

- ¹ Buckminster Fuller, a prominent American architect and designer, originally developed this type of dome for *The Jeshyn International Fair*, Kabul, Afghanistan, 1956. The out-of-edge Dome has become the face of US international exhibitions since Kabul. Fuller's design bureau was suggested to create a similar dome for the 1959 ANEM but Fuller was unable to do with the set deadline. The Moscow construction required an upgrade so it would be able to withstand the snow, and Fuller could not develop it within seven months. George Nelson, however, took and completed the project. Beverly Payeff-Masey in conversation with the author, Metaform Design International: the Masey Archives, November 21, 2014. Hereafter: The Masey Archives. For more on the history of the dome, see also Jack Masey and Conway Lloyd Morgan, *Cold War Confrontations: US Exhibitions and Their Role in the Cultural Cold War* (Baden: Lars Müller Publishers, 2008), 170–83.
- ² After the 1970s, the Dome was demolished and the Umbrella pavilions were removed.
- ³ For more on Khrushchev's and Soviet expectations from the show, see Masey and Morgan, *Cold War Confrontations*, 154–155; Susan Emily Reid, "Who Will Beat Whom? Soviet Popular Reception of the American National Exhibition in Moscow, 1959," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 6, 4 (2005): 860–65.
- ⁴ Masey and Morgan, *Cold War Confrontations*, 154.
- ⁵ Beverly Payeff-Masey in conversation with the author, the Masey Archives, November 21, 2014.
- ⁶ Facts about the American National Exhibition in Moscow July 25–Sept. 4, 1959 (a report from USIA Office of Public Information), 2. Records of USIA. Record Group 306. Records of Office of Exhibits. Entry: UD-UP 10. Moscow Exhibition. Box 1 (of 1). Folder: Policy Statements on the USSR. National Archives and Records Administration, College Park (NARA II). Hereafter documents from the collection cited as document title, RG 306, entry, box, folder, NARA II.
- ⁷ As it is put on page one of the "Facts About the National Exhibition in Moscow," the purpose is "To strengthen the foundations of world peace by increasing understanding in the Soviet Union of the American people, the land in which they live, and the broad range of American life, including American science, technology and culture." Soviet propaganda used similar rhetoric for statements on the ANEM both in the official documentation and in the press.
- ⁸ *Basic Policy Guidance for the U.S. Exhibit in Moscow in 1959 (secret)*. RG 306. Entry: UD-UP 10. Moscow Exhibition. Box 1 (of 1). Folder: Policy Statements on the USSR. NARA II.

- ⁹ A sarcastic and telling remark: "The objectives outlined in the memo are good. However, the phrase 'Create in the minds' [create the desire for a wider choice of quality goods and services than are presently available for them] . . . is inaccurate, since the desire . . . is already the most dominant factor in the mind of the average citizen. The first two objectives might be rephrased as follows: (1) The primary aim of the exhibit is to stimulate further aiming the peoples of the Soviet Union their desire for a wider choice of quality goods and services than is presently available to them, thereby creating additional pressure on the regime to bring about modification of its economic plan at the expense of the USSR's aggressive potential." Office Memorandum, from Sivard to Roberts. Comments on your memo on the Gorki Park Exhibition, October 9, 1958. RG 306. Entry: UD-UP 10. Moscow Exhibition. Box 1 (of 1). Folder: USA: 1965. American National Exhibition in Moscow. NARA II. See also the project of the show "US National Exhibit, Gorki Part, Moscow, 1959" located in the same folder.
- ¹⁰ For example, Reid challenges the dominant interpretations of the ANEM as of an unquestionably efficient ideological subversion of the Soviet people. Reid argues that the significance of the show is often overstated because Western scholars tend to approach the ANEM "from a standpoint of victors." Reid, "Who will Beat Whom?," 857.
- ¹¹ Cite by: Masey and Morgan, *Cold War Confrontations*, 214.
- ¹² For more on the history of the assembling, see Marilyn S. Kushner, "Exhibiting Art at the American National Exhibition in Moscow, 1959. Domestic Politics and Cultural Diplomacy," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 4, 1 (2002): 6–26.
- ¹³ For the history of the art section in the USSR, see Michael Krenn, *Fall-Out Shelters for the Human Spirit: American Art and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 155–73; Julia Bailey, "The Spectre of Communist Art: American Modernism and the Challenge of Socialist Realism, 1923–1960" (PhD diss., University College London, 2015), 173–92.
- ¹⁴ Office Memorandum, from Sivard to Roberts. Comments on your memo on the Gorki Park Exhibition. October 9, 1958. RG 306. Entry: UD-UP 10. Moscow Exhibition. Box 1 (of 1). Folder: USA: 1965. American National Exhibition in Moscow. NARA II.
- ¹⁵ Kushner, "Exhibiting Art at the American National Exhibition in Moscow, 1959."
- ¹⁶ Edith Gregor Halpert, lecture delivered at the Brooklyn Museum of Art, October 19, 1959, on the 1959 American National Art Exhibition in Moscow. Tape-recorded by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, and transcribed by the Downtown Gallery staff, 4. Downtown Gallery records, 1824-1974, bulk 1926–1969. Separate and Related Materials. AAA. Hereafter: Halpert's lecture, October 19, 1959.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*

- 18 For more on the controversy, see Kushner, "Exhibiting Art at the American National Exhibition in Moscow, 1959," 10–17. See also Krenn, *Fall-Out Shelters*, 155–73.
- 19 For a complete account of exhibiting American visual art in the Soviet Union during the 1950s to the 1960s, see my doctoral dissertation, "The Representation of American Visual Art in the USSR during the Cold War (1950s to the late 1960s)" (PhD diss., Jacobs University Bremen, 2016).
- 20 Both the catalog and the brochure were issued for the initial collection of contemporary art, assembled by the jury. Therefore, these issues did not cover the additional pre-World War I paintings. My focus now is on the collection of contemporary American art represented as a conceptual unity.
- 21 Amerikanskaia zhivopis' i skulptura. Amerikanskaia natsional'naia vystavka v Moskve, 25 iulia – 5 sentiabria 1959 goda, exhibition catalog (Detroit, Arkhiv Amerikanskogo Iskusstva: Meridian, 1959).
- 22 *Sovremennoe amerikanskoe iskusstvo*, brochure for the Art Section of the ANEM, text by Lloyd Goodrich, 1959. Hereafter: *Sovremennoe amerikanskoe iskusstvo* (brochure).
- 23 Gretchen Simms, "The 1959 American National Exhibition in Moscow and the Soviet Artistic Reaction to the Abstract Art" (PhD diss., Universität Wien, 2007), 47.
- 24 The report "Facts about the ANEM" estimates the attendance as 3.5 million. The papers from the Masey Archives give 2 million. (US Government Exhibitions Supervised by Jack Masey. The Masey Archives. Hereafter when citing materials from the Masey Archives, I do not specify an exact box number or folder title. I received the documents in a single email from Beverly Payeff-Masey with no exact location specified.) Other USIA reports from RG 306 frequently give around 2.7 million. One can safely assume that the attendance was about 3 million people.
- 25 The souvenirs were highly valued. John R. Thomas, a guide from the show, defines the popularity of souvenirs among the visitors as the "souvenir craze." John R. Thomas. "Report on Service with the American National Exhibition in Moscow. March 15, 1960." Social Science Division. Rand Corporation. P-1859. Reproduced by the RAND Corporation. Santa Monica. California, 24–25. Rand Corporation website, accessed November 14, 2012, <http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/papers/2008/P1859.pdf>. Vladimir Paperny, who attended the show, recalled that he had preserved the objects from the ANEM, like many other visitors. Vladimir Paperny in a skype-conversation with the author, June 15, 2013.
- 26 Lloyd Goodrich, "What is American in American Art?," *Art in America* 46, 3 (1958): 18–33.
- 27 Lloyd Goodrich, "American Painting and Sculpture 1930–1959: The Moscow Exhibition," *College Art Journal* 18, 4 (1959): 288–301.

- 28 Lloyd Goodrich, "What is American in American Art?," *Art in America* 51, 4 (1963): 24–39. The 1958 and 1963 texts from *Art in America* are identical if not to consider the different illustrations in the articles.
- 29 This primary goal of the exhibition is clearly stated in the opening paragraphs of the Russian-language catalog and brochure. *Sovremennoe amerikanskoe iskusstvo* (brochure), 2.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 When claiming this, Goodrich removes the negative evaluation of Regionalism of Benton and Wood which the author provided in his earlier articles.
- 32 *Sovremennoe amerikanskoe iskusstvo* (brochure), 11–12. The Russian-language version of this passage from the brochure and the English version from *College Art Journal* are nearly the same, except that Goodrich, in the last sentence of the Russian text, does not claim American art to be an expression of "democratic society." He simply puts: "Etot mnozhestvennyi kharakter amerikanskogo iskusstva predstavliaet polnuiu svobodu individualizmu i eksperimentirovaniu." However, in the English version, Goodrich argues: "What with representationalism, expressionism, abstraction, and all their variations, contemporary American art is among the most diversified of any nation. . . . We have individuals and whole schools of many differing viewpoints, all having their measure of validity. This pluralistic character of American art is the appropriate expression of a *democratic society*, giving wide scope to individualism and experimentation [italics–mine]." The omission is significant because it demonstrates that the author had been proofreading the text for the Soviet audience, who would be definitely disturbed by the claim that the United States was a democracy. According to Soviet propaganda, the USSR was the "genuine" democracy. For the English version of the passage, see Lloyd Goodrich, "American Painting and Sculpture 1930–1959: The Moscow Exhibition," *College Art Journal* 18, 4 (1959): 300.
- 33 *Sovremennoe amerikanskoe iskusstvo* (brochure), 12.
- 34 Lloyd Goodrich, "What is American in American Art?," *Art in America* 46, 3 (1958): 33. Lloyd Goodrich, "What is American in American Art?," *Art in America* 51, 4 (1963): 39.
- 35 *Sovremennoe amerikanskoe iskusstvo* (brochure), 7.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 Richard McLanathan, "The Art Exhibit at the American National Exhibition in Moscow 1959," 3. Downtown Gallery records, 1824–1974, bulk 1926–969. Box 98. Writings by Others: misc. undated: 1927–1968. Reel 5638. Frame 381–401. AAA. Hereafter: Report by McLanathan.
- 38 Ibid.
- 39 Ibid.

- 40 Beverly Payeff-Masey in conversation with the author, the Masey Archives, February 16, 2015.
- 41 More estimates in Report by McLanathan. For more information on the art section proceedings, see also Halpert's lecture, October 19, 1959.
- 42 Susan Reid was one of the first to discuss the limitations of the ANEM comment books. See Reid, "Who Will Beat Whom?," 870–76.
- 43 For example, punctuation and spelling can help determining a person's background. Such errors are normally omitted when translating the comment books from Russian into English.
- 44 See a reprint of USIA quantified breakdown of comments on specific exhibits in visitors' books for the ANEM issued in Reid's "Who Will Beat Whom?," 872.
- 45 I am indebted to Alexei Fominykh for sharing the original comment books with me. For more on the history of the original comment books, see Aleksei Fominykh, " 'Pictures at an Exhibition:' Comment Books from the 1959 American Exhibit in Moscow, a Recovered Source (Introduction to the Archival Publication)," *Ab Imperio* 2 (2010): 151–70. See also a selection of original comments published in the same issue of *Ab Imperio* (p.187–217).
- 46 In this article, I examine the full four original sources: *Book One*, 118 pages, July 28–August 5; *Book Two*, 146 pages, August 6–15; *Book Three*, 178 pages, August 16–27; *Book Four*, 119 pages, August 27–September 4. Translations of the comments quoted in this article are mine.
- 47 The location at the exit has benefits for interpretation of the reception of American art. The books at the exit allow seeing the general reception of art within the whole show. People leaving the ANEM could potentially write about any section or exhibit, so their selection of focusing on one or several topics from dozens represented at the ANEM is important. In addition to the four books placed at the exit, other comment books were placed at each section, including art section. However, apparently, they have not been preserved, except several selections of comments from art section available in Halpert's papers (Downtown Gallery records, AAA.). Goodrich papers from AAA also include some of the pages and comments preserved. Some of the lists are from original Russian comment books whereas others are translations by the USIA. These papers can't be used for any statistical conclusion. They also hardly show any trends in reception, other than the ones found in the full four Russian books central to my research.
- 48 John R. Thomas. "Report on Service with the American National Exhibition," 4.
- 49 It is an open question how to characterize the audience and to go beyond a generalization "Soviet visitors." Reid's article "Who Will Beat Whom?" demonstrates the both geographical and social diversity of the visitors. However, no social or demographic statistics is available because not all the comments were signed. My examination of the four original books placed

- at the exit allows me to speculate that the majority of the commentators were the working class people. I conclude this from the argumentation of commentators, from the frequent grammatical errors in comments, from the language-usage, and from the vocabulary. Signed comments are rare and show that the exhibition was attended by various professionals from doctors to engineers. Only two visitors indicated in their comments that they were professional artists.
- 50 A special note on the figures is required. Several comments are unreadable, some comments refer to each other and, therefore, can be thought of being one or two separate comments. Therefore, there is a certain degree of inaccuracy.
- 51 20 comments in Book One; 35 in Book Two; 29 in Book Three; and 28 in Book Four.
- 52 "V komnate smekha," *Sovetskaia Kul'tura*, July 30, 1959.
- 53 Russian phrase meaning, "What is it?"
- 54 Halpert's lecture, October 19, 1959, 5.
- 55 Report by McLanathan, 3.
- 56 *Ibid.*, 2.
- 57 *Ibid.*, 6.
- 58 My speculations on how the sculptures of nude females violated the Soviet visitor's taste are inspired by Susan Reid's analysis of the reactions provoked by Robert Falk's nude portrait *Obnazhennaia v kresle* displayed at the infamous exhibition *30 let MOSKh* at the Manege, 1962. Susan Reid, "In the Name of the People: The Manege Affair Revisited," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian History* 6, 4 (2005): 673–716.
- 59 More similarly sympathetic comments can be found on the disjointed lists from the Downtown Gallery and Goodrich Collections. Intelligentsia—students, artists, and academics—would most frequently write such comments.
- 60 See, for example, Halpert's lecture, October 19, 1959.
- 61 Report by McLanathan, 1.
- 62 *Ibid.*, 5.
- 63 Edith Halpert, "Moscow Greeting. American Art Arouses Lively Response," *The New York Times*, August 2, 1959.
- 64 Reid, "Who Will Beat Whom?," 900.
- 65 For more on the artistic impact of the exhibition, see Gretchen Simms, "The 1959 American National Exhibition in Moscow and the Soviet Artistic Reaction to the Abstract Art"; Lola Kantor-Kazovsky, "Vtoroi russkii avangard, ili Vizual'naia kul'tura epokhi kholodnoi voiny," *Artgid*, April 29, 2014, accessed July 7, 2017, <http://artguide.com/posts/583-second-russian-avant-garde>.