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Exhibiting a New Nation : Soviet Art in Western Countries in the Early 1920s.

In 1922, the Soviet Union searches different ways how to develop diplomatic relationship with Western countries. One of these ways is the organisation of exhibitions of artworks abroad. The main purpose of these exhibitions is to develop a new image of Soviet Union as a new country to be recognised and to be accepted on the international level. On the one hand, the art presented in these exhibitions had to be something new and unknown for the Western onlooker. This is a reason why preference in the choice of art-works was given to young artists of avant-garde. On the other hand, it had to be different from works of art presented by Russian emigrant artists, who were trying to claim a genuine Russian culture. Therefore these exhibitions represented as well the fight for the Russian cultural heritage between Soviet Union and the Russian white Diaspora in the 1920s. Analysing the officially organised exhibitions abroad in the 1920s can allow to understand the way how was created the image of a “national” Soviet art. This art was not only Russian but had to represent all the Soviet Republics, to show that all the nations composing the new state were equal, even in art. My research is based on the demonstration of Soviet art in France, Germany, Italy and the USA, therefore the main subject of this paper will be the exhibition of Russian art in Germany in 1922, the exhibition of Russian artists in the US in 1924, the pavilion of the Soviet Union on the International exhibition in Paris in 1925 and the Soviet pavilion on the Venice Biennale during the 1920s. The purpose of this paper is to bring a light on the way how the Soviet art was considered as Soviet, and not as Russian, Jewish, Ukrainian, Armenian etc. In which way the official Soviet representatives made their choices of artworks for the foreign exhibitions, and how their reception abroad influenced the construction of Soviet identity in the field of art? I will answer these questions through the study of different types of sources (archives, periodical press, catalogues).