

Moscow Photo Salon Packs Variety Into a Small Selection

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Roger Fenton's Crimean War photos recall days of enmity with the West.

A large-scale photo expo, or salon, is one of the hallmarks of an artistic city, and photo salons like ParisPhoto in France or AIPAD in the U.S. have been attracting crowds of wealthy collectors for many years. However, as in far too many sectors in the arts, Moscow lags behind. The Moscow International Photographic Salon, which opened Wednesday at the Gallery of Classical Photography, has only existed since last year and even now is miniscule in comparison to the major international shows. However, what it lacks in size it makes up for in the fascinating variety of the works displayed.

"Interest in collecting photography has grown intermittently over the last year. ... At this point, we are surprised by neither the quantity of collectors nor the sharpness of the questions that they ask," said the photo salon's art director, Mark Kobert, in a press release. The salon has gathered an interesting assortment of photos for the collectors to peruse, ranging from classic 19th-century photography to well-known contemporary Western artists, also

including up-and-coming locals.

Most of the works are presented by a number of prominent photo galleries that are displaying collections at the salon. The Greenburg Gallery and Frolov Gallery have both brought numerous works to the salon, and special projects have been organized by well-known Russian photographers like Rauf Mamedov and Yulia Spiridonova.

Mamedov has created a series of photos based on biblical scenes using models who have Down's Syndrome, creating a wholly new take on these oft-depicted images. Spiridonova presents a series called "Crying Festival," which consists of images of nude, weeping women.

The salon also has a historical component, with exhibits of photos by classical photographers such as 19th-century Parisian photographer Louis-Emile Durandelle and Khudoybergen Devonov, an Uzbek photographer who documented pre-Soviet Turkestan. The gallery has also gathered selected works by famous photographers like Ansel Adams, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Roger Fenton and others.

Perhaps the most surprising thing about the gallery is the sheer variety of the offerings encapsulated by the fairly small salon: From the immense picture of gold bullion by Ralf Kaspers, to the pictures of traditional Russian village life presented by the Rachmaninov Garden Photogallery, and Igor Amelkovich's photos of statuesque nudes, it feels as though no two images are similar, and every gallery and photographer offers a different view on the world.

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