Instaart Presents Art Through Instagram Filters

By Maria Evdokimova

September 22, 2013

A visitor examines Instagram images displayed on a plasma screen at "Instaart" exhibition in Vauxhall Center. **Maria Evdokimova**

Instaart, a new exhibition of Instagram photography, has grabbed the attention of Moscow's social media crowd. The exhibit, which opened at Vauxhall Center last Friday, is part of the parallel program of the 5th Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art.

Bloggers, photographers and celebrities were involved in an unprecedented event, the first Russian competition for Instagram users, which consists of a selection of images on display at the recently opened Vauxhall Center exhibition space inside Rizhsky Station. The gallery consists of a small main hall, second floor veranda and is painted white to help focus attention on the exhibits.

Instagram is a free service for mobile devices used for taking and sharing photos or short videos with friends. Its users are people of all ages with varied interests and from all

backgrounds. First established in 2010, Instagram has been downloaded more than 100 million times all over the world. The application provides the opportunity to capture moments and alter them with the help of a selection of unique digital filters that allow anyone to create a private piece of art. Another Instagram feature is that all the resulting pictures and videos are put in a square shape similar to Polaroid camera images.

The Instaart competition organizers invited all comers to take photos using Instagram and post them online with the hashtag #Voxxter. From March 15 to mid-September, Russian Instagram users have sent nearly 8000 pictures and 2500 of them were selected to be included in the exhibition. Some images were increased in size and printed and the rest are displayed on several plasma screens in the hall.

The Instaart exhibits show daily life of people from across Russia. Users share their impressions of a wide range of activities: from special to everyday moments, far-reaching landscapes and historical buildings to a couple kissing in a cafe and intimate family moments. Memorable, funny and abstract snapshots are divided into several categories that represent the most popular subjects among Russian Instagram users: places of interest, monuments, feet against the background of picturesque mountains, self portraits, street art and more. A display with a selection of popular users' pictures called "Experts of Instagram" stands separately from the other photos.

The exhibition is quite small and takes barely half an hour to explore, so despite the best intentions of the organizers, Instaart fails to live up to its full potential. Photos are printed in low quality, and the organizers' selection makes visitors feel like they are checking out a random Instagram feed.

Instaart is open from Sept. 20 to Oct. 19 at Vauxhall Center, 1 Rizhskaya Ploshchad, Metro Rizhskaya. For more information on Instaart, visit the Vauxhall Center website at art-vokzal.ru*.*

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