

Moscow Metro Opens Its Doors at Winzavod

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October 27, 2013



Bust of parachutist on the background of the decorative panels at the Dinamo station. **Christopher Brennan**

On Thursday, the Proun gallery at the Winzavod Center for Contemporary Art opened the exhibition "We Have the Metro!" which gives a chance to get acquainted with the Moscow Metro's history from the very beginning. Devoted to the creation of the capital's "underground palaces," it takes visitors back to the first half of the 20th century.

The Moscow metro system was founded in 1935. Considered to be among the world's most beautiful metro systems, it contains 188 stations, 44 of which are designated as cultural heritage sites. There are many curious facts connected with the Moscow metro — for instance, fossils that are millions of years old can be found in the walls of more than 20 stations. Also, plenty of mysterious legends tell of ghosts and incredible creatures inhabiting the tunnels.

The design of subway stations such as Ploshchad Revolutsii and Okhotny Ryad with its representations of Red Army soldiers, communal farm workers and politicians shows the power of Soviet ideology and the propaganda for collective work and patriotism in that historical period. Many Soviet authors dedicated songs and poems to the metro, and numerous Russian films contain scenes with it, all of which has made the Moscow underground a kind of symbol of Russia.

The exposition at the Proun Gallery centers on the use of different artistic crafts — such as painting, fresco, mosaic and sculpture — united in building the metro. Exhibits show some of the finest examples of the Soviet school of art. Documents, schematics and a short documentary video projected onto a wall show the process of building the metro.

The schematic drafts of stations created by prominent architects and artists of the Soviet Union — Deineka, Taranov and Manizer, for instance — bring a strong feeling of majesty with their ornate columns and richly traced panels. Shiny models of decorations and carefully drawn sketches of wall and ceiling paintings are full of solemnity. The expressions on busts of parachutists and snipers convey the energy that the sculptors wanted to impart on these models of Soviet women. One of the most remarkable exhibits, a piece of white column capital lying under the glass, demonstrates the giant size of every decoration detail.

The Proun's exhibition aims at uncovering the uniqueness of the Moscow subway not only as an outstanding memorial of architecture, but also as a complex combination of decorative elements.

"We Have the Metro!" will run until Dec. 25 at the Proun gallery at the Winzavod Center for Contemporary Art, 1 4 Syromyatnicheskaya Ulitsa. Metro Kurskaya.

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Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2013/10/27/moscow-metro-opens-its-doors-at-winzavod-a28973>