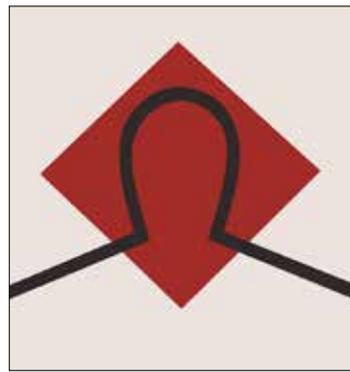
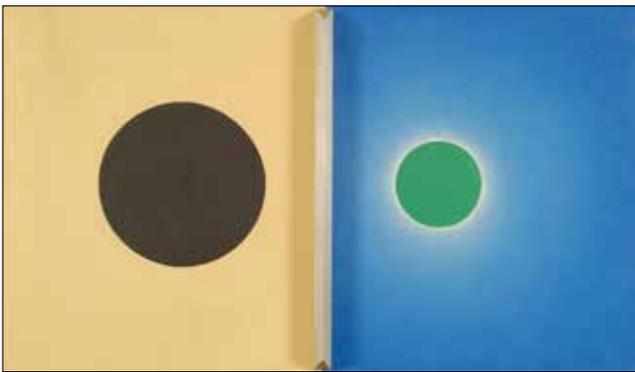


PRESS RELEASE

LEONID BORISOV LESSONS IN GEOMETRY

18 September 2014 - 16 January 2015

Curated by Anya Stonelake



Left to right: *Heaven and Earth*, 1978, mixed media on canvas, 64 x 110cm, *Icon*, 2008, acrylic on canvas, 100 x 95cm, *The Ball*, 2000, acrylic and wood 20 x 26 x 10cm

Gallery Elena Shchukina is delighted to present *Lessons in Geometry*, the first ever UK exhibition of St Petersburg-born (Leningrad) artist Leonid Borisov (1943-2013). The show, featuring a wide range of media including painting, sculpture, collage and photography, spans five decades of artistic production from the Soviet to post-Soviet eras.

Renowned for geometric abstraction, Borisov's initial encounter with the genre was in 1957 when he visited an American abstract art exhibition in Moscow. Although a trained engineer, it was not until meeting underground self-taught artists Alexander Leonov and Dmitry Plavinsky in the early 70s that Borisov decided to become an artist.

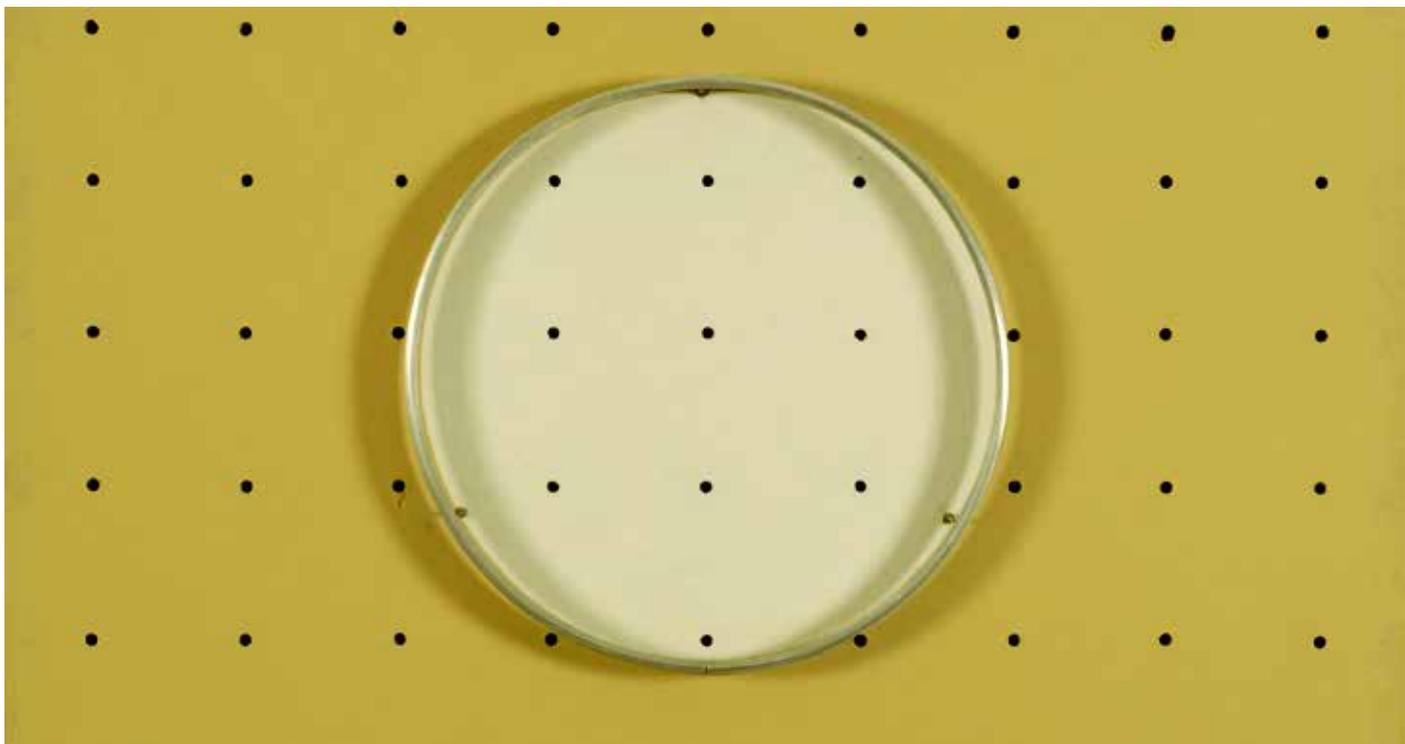
Articulating the geometric aspects of the historical Russian avant-garde was key in establishing himself within Soviet Nonconformist Art, which would lead to his participation in the first exhibition of unofficial art in St Petersburg in 1975. Working outside the rubric of Socialist Realism, the nonconformists rejected Stalin's policy unifying aesthetic and ideological objectives.

Despite participating in all significant St Petersburg exhibitions since the 1970s, Borisov's passion for geometry made him even more of an "outsider" in his hometown. This put him in line with Moscow instead of the St Petersburg

school. He looked towards Moscow Conceptualism (early 1970s – 1980s) rather than Soviet Nonconformist Art itself, which was in its early days more preoccupied with quasi-modernist painting techniques.

Like many of his contemporaries applying conceptual art and appropriation to subvert socialist ideology, Borisov's style is also directly linked to Kazimir Malevich (1879 – 1935), the founder of the nihilistic Suprematist movement. Whereas Malevich's *Black Square* (1915) - a black square on a white background - is a Suprematist icon, Borisov's appropriations create distinct geometric icons that are at once playful and revolutionary.

Outwardly looking, Borisov did not only follow Russian art of the 20th century. As Alexander Borovsky, Head of the Department of Contemporary Art at the State Russian Museum puts it: "There is no mathematics behind his geometrical compositions as with Richard Paul Losche; his three-dimensional objects are not based upon aerodynamic calculations as with Max Villa; his sculptures and boxes nailed together lack the industrialism of Donald Judd, but it is *his* geometry, *his* volumes, *his* roughness, irregularities, naiveté." As such, even when Borisov's works often appear to echo the work of Western and other Russian artists alike, their particular energy infuse these with an element of originality within the geometrical tradition.



The Wheel, 1975, mixed media on MDF board, 63 x 96cm

Leonid Borisov graduated from the Leningrad Electro-Technical Institute of Communications (1968). He associated with Vladimir Nemukhin, Eduard Steinberg and members of the Dvizhenie (second half of the 1970s). He was also a member of the International Federation of Artists (1992). Borisov died of a heart attack on Russian Orthodox Christmas Eve whilst leaving his St Petersburg studio (2013).

Selected solo shows include the Nadezhda Krupskaya House of Culture (St Petersburg); Gallery 21 (St Petersburg); State Russian

Museum (St Petersburg) and Moscow Museum of Modern Art (Moscow). Group exhibitions include the Nevsky Palace of Culture (St Petersburg).

Borisov's works can be found in numerous collections including the State Tretyakov Gallery (Moscow); State Russian Museum (St Petersburg); State Hermitage Museum (St Peterburg); Moscow Museum of Modern Art (Moscow); Bar-Gera Collection (Cologne); Norton and Nancy Dodge Collection / Zimmerli Art Museum (New Jersey); Kolidzei Art Foundation (New Jersey).

For more information, please contact **Martin Macdonald** on +44 (0)20 7499 6019, martin@elenashchukina.com

Listings information: Leonid Borisov: Lessons in Geometry. 18 September 2014 - 16 January 2015

Opening hours: Monday - Friday 9:30 - 17:30, Saturday by appointment only

10 LEES PLACE, MAYFAIR, LONDON W1K 6LL

+44 (0)20 7499 6019

INFO@GALLERYELENASHCHUKINA.COM

WWW.GALLERYELENASHCHUKINA.COM