

## **Boris Orlov: CIRCLE OF HEROES**

A project by the Stella Art Foundation  
in the Greek and Roman Antiquities Department of the  
Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna  
November 23, 2010 - March 20, 2011

Stella Art Foundation is continuing its exhibition series in collaboration with Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. In 2008, the Foundation had on display at the museum its exhibition *That Obscure Object of Art* featuring works from the Foundation's collections. In 2009, the Museum's Northern Renaissance and Baroque Art Department presented *In Situ* project by Igor Makarevich's and Elena Elagina. Finally, in November 2010 the Museum's Greek and Roman Antiquities Department will host an exhibition by Boris Orlov, one of the "founding fathers" of the Sots-Art movement, entitled *Circle of Heroes*.

Stella Kesaeva, President of Stella Art Foundation, gave the following comment before the event: "We have to admit that we didn't choose a Russian artist for this project straight away. I hope that the choice was made well. Boris Orlov managed to integrate contemporary artwork into the antiquity halls of one of the worlds' best museums with a fine tact and flexibility. I am confident that Western audience will remember Orlov's sculptures quite well after this project, while the exhibition will become a new important milestone for this remarkable artist."

Kunsthistorisches Museum comprises one of the world's most valuable collections of Greek and Roman art. Its permanent antiquity exhibition comprises some 2500 items, including a collection of Greek vases and Roman portraits, a wide assortment of cameos, including the famous "Gemma Augustea", the golden treasure of Nagyszentmiklós, unique works of bronze such as the statue "Young Man from Magdalensberg" (*Jüngling vom Magdalensberg*) and the tablet "Decree of the Senate on Bacchanalia" (*Senatus consultum de Bacchanalibus*).

Boris Orlov's artwork complement this setup very naturally and with excellent dramatic effect. Works of antiquity surrounding it provide, to a considerable extent, a clue for understanding the artist's intentions. Attributes of imperial style are one of the focal points of his art. The era of antiquity produced the ultimate empire of the Western world, the Roman Empire, which served as a model for all the subsequent empires, such as the Holy Roman Empire and the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the Middle Ages and the New Times alike, or, indeed, the Soviet Union and the United States. As Boris Orlov remarked before the opening ceremony, "The exhibition demonstrates the universality of the model using the Soviet empire as an example. The project isn't there to praise an empire; rather, I am its dispassionate and ironic observer, who attempts to penetrate the primordial subconscious levels of the heroic motivation".

Boris Orlov's work is summarized in formulas of grand imperial style. The artist identifies and visualizes *archetypes* and *arch-models* of imperial mind. He especially emphasizes all things *heroic* and *triumphant* as the fundamental components of external imagery of any empire. Orlov notes that his intention was to depict "an empire as the supreme embodiment of an all-embracing will, pomposity, seductive grandeur, hypertrophied pageantry, triumphalism and pretence to global reach". One should note that the artist's irony deprives this imagery of the gravity that is so typical of any official art.

Orlov's architecturally precise sculptures of wood and bronze decorated with bright enamels create a synthetic image of an ideal hero of all times and empires and look back at heroic characters of the classical antiquity. His "Imperial Bust", for example - a sculpture with classical Ceasar's head put on a torso of a revolutionary sailor of the famous "Aurora" cruiser and crowned with a sailor's cap, will take its place directly opposite the sculptural portrait of Ceasar showing the emperor in the last years of his life. Images of two military commanders, Zhukov and Belisarius, both once praised as great leaders, only to be thrown out by their respective 'Ceasars', are united in a single split and "reconstructed" bust portrait of a hero, to be displayed in the same hall with portraits of Roman emperors and patricians. Bright enamel "parsunas" made up of enormous military service ribbons in a structure resembling totems for worship will take up several window frames. An airplane combining elements of Soviet and German national symbols will be hovering over Roman mosaics depicting Theseus. Small elegant busts of Stalin made of fine china, in which typical classical architectural features of pompous buildings of the Stalin era crown the leader's head not unlike turbans of Eastern tyrants, will be placed in a showcase in the hall of ancient miniature sculptures.

One of Orlov's favourite principles allowing him to bring together signs of different ages in fully integrated works of art is *polystylism*. History, in his view, is just as undivided field for experiments. The artist speaks of the invariably cyclic pattern of the emergence of "heroic"

and "imperial" epochs in history: "It is a heroic circle: birth, triumph, fall and return into the primary matter, followed by a new cycle, and so it goes, cycle after cycle." In Vienna's Kunsthistorisches Museum Orlov constructs an ideal model of these transformations.

## PRESS PHOTOGRAPHS

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*Empire Style Bouquet.JPG*  
Boris Orlov  
**Empire Style Bouquet**  
1988  
100x53x23 cm  
Bronze, enamel  
Courtesy: Boris Orlov



*Orlov\_Empress\_small.jpg*  
Boris Orlov  
**Bust of Empress**  
1988  
63x46x18 cm  
Bronze, enamel  
Courtesy: Stella Art Foundation



*Orlov\_Empress\_Big.jpg*  
Boris Orlov  
**Bust of Empress**  
1989-2010  
108x107x40 cm.  
Bronze, enamel  
Courtesy: Boris Orlov



*Orlov\_Hockey player.JPG*  
Boris Orlov  
**Hockey Player**  
1975 - 2010  
93x80x30 cm  
Wood, plaster, enamel  
Courtesy: Boris Orlov



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*Orlov\_Rastrelli Style Bust.jpg*

Boris Orlov

**Rastrelli Style Bust**

1996

70x40x18 cm

Bronze, enamel

Courtesy: Stella Art Foundation



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*Orlov\_Restoration experience.JPG*

Boris Orlov

**Restoration Experience. Totem**

2009

130x142x30 cm

Bronze, enamel

Courtesy: Boris Orlov



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*IMG\_6425*

Boris Orlov

**Zhukov-Belizarius**

2010

37x18x22 cm

Faience, lead

Courtesy: Boris Orlov



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*orlov\_vpered\_1.jpg*

Boris Orlov

**Never Turn back!**

1989

Tryptich. Left part

60x120x6 cm.

Wood, fiberboard, enamel

Courtesy: Stella Art Foundation



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*orlov\_vpered\_2.jpg*

**Never Turn back!**

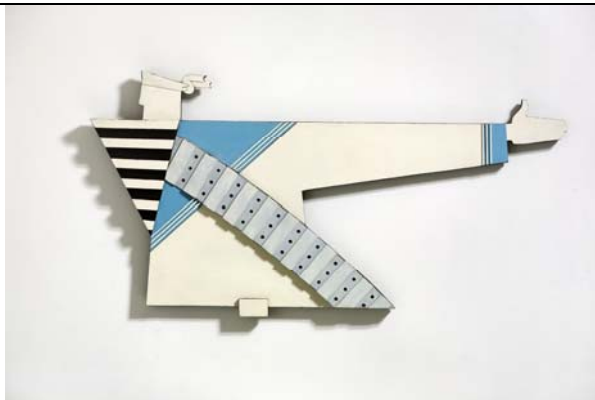
1989

Tryptich. Central part

60x120x6 cm.

Wood, fiberboard, enamel

Courtesy: Stella Art Foundation



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*orlov\_vpered\_3.jpg*

**Never Turn back!**

1989

Tryptich. Right part

60x120x6 cm

Wood, fiberboard, enamel

Courtesy: Stella Art Foundation



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*IMG\_6485.jpg*

**State Bust**

1989

45x55x15 cm

Bronze, enamel

Courtesy: Boris Orlov



## OPENING HOURS AND ENTRANCE FEES

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### Kunsthistorisches Museum

Maria Theresien-Platz  
1010 Vienna

Tuesdays - Sundays  
10 am - 6 pm

Thursdays 10am - 9 pm

(The Coin Collection closes at 6 pm)

Adults

Concessions

Vienna-Card

Groups of 10 or over, each  
guided tour

Children under 19

Annual ticket

Audio Guide (German, English)

€ 12,-

€ 9,-

€ 11,-

€ 8,-

€ 3,-

frei

€ 29,-

€ 4,-

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## PUBLICATIONS

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An exhibition catalogue will be published in conjunction with the show.

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## PRESS OFFICE

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