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Roberto Matta and the Fourth Dimension

The works of Roberto Matta (1911–2002) can't be found in Russian museums, and now finally, on April 10, the long-awaited and several times delayed exhibition of the Chilean Surrealist painter, sculptor, graphic artist and architect opens at the State Hermitage.



Matta was born in Santiago, in a family of a landlord, and received a degree in architecture at the Catholic University, though he was more inclined to paint. Taking a job as a sailor, he left for Europe where he travelled for a while and got a position at Le Corbusier's office in Paris. Visiting Spain, he met Salvador Dali and Andre Breton, who supported the gifted newcomer and introduced him to the Surrealists. In 1939, the artist came to New York, where he had his first exhibition.

Matta made his name by experimenting. He used painterly means—color, rhythms, and stains—to research hidden phenomena of the human psyche, which he called "mindscape." The avant-garde painter applied paint, often fluorescent, with a sponge rather than a brush. Matta would choose large canvases for his paintings to group them later into monumental cycles.



The English painter Gordon Onslow Ford once drew Matta's attention to the theories of Russian philosopher Pyotr Ouspensky, who said that the fourth dimension enhances the third dimension with a feeling of space, movement, and time.

The painter explained the peculiarities of his creativity in this way: "It is only the unknown that interests me. And I work only for the purpose to surprise myself." Now it is the audience's turn to be surprised, though Matta's works have been known for a long time and are highly valued in the market. For example, Die Galerie asked EUR 2.5 mln for Matta's *Opponent* (1945) at BRAFA fair last year.

The curators of the project are Dmitry Ozerkov, head of the State Hermitage contemporary art department, and Oksana Salamatina, who represents the US Hermitage Fund. The exhibition features 90 works from 23 private collections, mostly from the US.

April 10 – June 30. Saint Petersburg, White Hall of the General Staff building of the State Hermitage.

