



THE INSTITUTE OF MODERN RUSSIAN CULTURE

AT BLUE LAGOON

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STATUS

This is the fifty-first biannual Newsletter of the IMRC and follows the last issue that appeared in August, 2006. The information presented here relates primarily to events connected with the IMRC during the fall and winter of 2005. For the benefit of new readers, data on the present structure of the IMRC are given on the last page of this issue. IMRC Newsletters for 1979-2005 are available electronically and can be requested via e-mail at imrc@usc.edu. A full run can also be supplied on a CD disc (containing a searchable version in Microsoft Word) at a cost of \$25.00, shipping included (add \$5.00 if overseas airmail).

In August, 2004, the IMRC transferred the Newsletter to an electronic format and individuals and institutions on our courtesy list are receiving the issues as an e-attachment. Members in full standing, however, continue to receive hard copies of the Newsletter as well as the text in electronic format, wherever feasible. Please send us new and corrected e-mail addresses. An illustrated brochure describing the programs, collections, and functions of the IMRC is also available

RUSSIA: Almost True Story

Pelageia Petrovna was the *komendantsha* of a large apartment cooperative which the Union of Artists of the USSR had built in downtown Moscow over thirty years ago. Once the privileged abode of painters, sculptors and art historians, the apartments had long been privatized, but the studios and workshops on the top floor were still assumed to be common spaces, available for a nominal rent on a first come, first serve basis. Recently, one spring morning, Pelageia Petrovna was watching a reality show about the New Russians on the Moscow TNT Channel. Among the exotic turns of phrase such as villas in Monte Carlo, wine auctions at Sotheby's, Lamborghini sports cars, and Tiffany diamonds, one word, in particular – *pentkhauz* – took on a special resonance after the commentator explained that the essential meaning of this new plutocratic trophy was simply a loft with a panoramic view. It did not take long for Pelageia Petrovna to equate this concept of the penthouse with her own concept of the studio and to realize that her cooperative was an instant source of not just one or two, but twenty, penthouses, each with high ceilings, plate glass windows, balconies, and superb views of downtown. Pelageia Petrovna also understood that, in the hot world of Moscow real estate, the traditional ownership of these studios – by the Union of Artists of the USSR – was now questionable, if not, invalid inasmuch as that Union, with the demise of the USSR, no longer existed. Worth a try? Without further ado, Pelageia Petrovna had the titles reissued in her name, assumed ownership, sold the studios to a private agency for several million dollars and vanished, living happily ever after. Well, perhaps not forever: Pelageia Petrovna is 84 years old.