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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Dec. 9, 2009

(Note: High-resolution images of works from this exhibition are available upon request.)

Rare Soviet Propaganda Posters on View at Cornell Fine Arts Museum Exhibitions Open January 23, 2010

WINTER PARK, FL – On January 23, 2010, the Cornell Fine Arts Museum at Rollins College premieres a selection of rare, Stalinist-era propaganda posters from its permanent collection, along with a group of American and British propaganda posters from World War I, also from the collection. Entitled *Man and the Machine*, each poster group stands on its own as representations of the power of the image—and the artist—in social and political history. Juxtaposed as they are here, the two groups invite dialogue: between visual discourses of the machine, constructions of masculinity and femininity, urbanization, and nationalism. Many of the Soviet posters, for example, promote the collectivization of land and posit an agrarian utopia based on mechanical-industrial progress. One poster champions the use of female labor on *kolkhozes*, or collective farms: “Our duty is to push women in Kolkhozes forward and put this force into action,” urges the slogan, a quote by Josef Stalin, and the image depicts a woman behind a plow. The WWI posters, on the other hand, promote individual efforts to conserve or produce food in support of the Allied war effort. These American (and some British) posters both implicitly and explicitly call into question utopian visions of the machine and, in fact, depict its destructive capabilities.

The Poster Collection: Lost, Found, Restored. Although part of CFAM’s collection for many years, this significant trove of Soviet posters was only re-discovered during the Museum’s major renovation project between 2004 and 2006. All were in a very advanced state of deterioration. Museum staff believe the posters—ca. 1930—were given to Rollins sometime in the 1940s and were originally held by the library. There, according to Robyn Allers, Interim Director of CFAM, “very conscientious librarians—not realizing the artistic value of these works--catalogued each poster, writing a call

number in pencil and affixing a gum label containing a translation of the text on the front of each poster.” Beyond these obvious restoration issues, each poster required extensive conservation and restoration to make them exhibition-ready. This meticulous work, by conservator Alexandra von Hawk, has been extensively documented, and this documentation will be included in the exhibition.

Man and the Machine will continue CFAM’s mission of providing the highest quality exhibitions that encourage interdisciplinary thought. In technique and style, the hand of the artist is evident in each graphic image. Also evident, is the manipulative intent of the commissioner. Through these images, some of them shockingly direct, viewers will step back into a not-too-distant past and will find both parallels to the visual imagery bombarding them today as well as reminders of how powerful a tool the visual arts can be in service to ideology or cause—for good or ill.

Gallery hours: Tues. – Sat. 10:00 am to 4:00 pm., Sun. 1:00 to 5:00 pm.
Admission: \$5.00 for adults. FREE to CFAM members, Rollins College faculty, staff, all students with current ID, and children. The Cornell Fine Arts Museum is located on the campus of Rollins College near downtown Winter Park. For additional information please call 407-646-2526 or cfam.rollins.edu.

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