

# News Release

For Immediate Release

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## Exhibition explores Socialist Realist photography in the USSR *Emergence of a Productive Soviet Empire Portrayed in Color through the Photographs of Semyon Fridlyand*

DENVER— The Victoria H. Myhren Gallery at the University of Denver is pleased to announce its upcoming March 2008 exhibition: “*On the Road: Photography of the Soviet Empire*.” “*On the Road*” is co-curated by Dan Jacobs, director of the Myhren Gallery, and David Shneer, director of the Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Denver. The exhibition will comprise approximately 70 images drawn primarily from the archive of Soviet-era photographer Semyon Fridlyand (1906–1964). Exhibition dates are March 6, 2008–May 4, 2008. The exhibition opens with a public reception, Thursday, March 6, 5–8 p.m.

“*On the Road: Photography of the Soviet Empire*” is supported through the generosity of Russ and Cathy Dalbey and the Dalbey Education Institute. This premiere exhibition of images from the Fridlyand Archive will be accompanied by a catalog containing more than 50 B&W and color images, with essays by Shneer and Jacobs, and an online repository containing the Fridlyand images and information hosted by the University. “*On the Road*” is a joint project of DU’s Victoria H. Myhren Gallery and the Center for Judaic Studies.

Fridlyand was a key practitioner and advocate of Socialist Realism, a style of image-making that projected an overtly optimistic view of the evolving Soviet society. It featured heroic portraiture and scenes of progress, while glossing over the uglier aspects of Soviet society. Strong parallels exist between early Socialist Realism and corresponding movements in American photo-journalism of the 1930s. For instance, the celebration of the production economy in Soviet photographs could feature the monumental beauty of industrial plants and equipment in a style similar to Margaret Bourke-White’s work for *Life* magazine. In pre-WWII USSR, the elevation of the worker to heroic status was a principle objective of Communist Party propaganda—just as it was with the documentary projects of Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Farm Security Administration during the Great Depression.

Socialist Realism is most often associated with black and white photography, yet, remarkably, Fridlyand took much of his work in vivid color. His post-war photographs of youthful families, leisure pursuits, sight-seeing, and tourism present a fantasy world akin to that of American-style advertising in the 1950s. In challenging stereotypes of a chronically gray USSR, Semyon Fridlyand’s work provokes a reevaluation of conventional Western views of the Soviet empire.

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*The University of Denver (www.du.edu), the oldest private university in the Rocky Mountain region, enrolls approximately 10,850 students in its undergraduate and graduate programs. The Carnegie Foundation classifies the University of Denver as a Research University with high research activity.*