

## Russian Resurgence offers contrast to Faberge

Ironies unavoidable  
in two exhibitions

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**Russian Resurgence: Recent Works by Timur Novikov**, an exhibition of fabric collages and paintings on textiles, is mounted in the galleries adjoining the Center for the Fine Arts show of treasures from the House of Faberge. You cannot avoid the tickling ironies.

Faberge and Novikov are from the same city (St. Petersburg, a.k.a. Leningrad), both made their names while young (Novikov is now 34), both exhibit a taste for Russian opulence, and both are responsible for types of politically incorrect art that the Soviets forced underground. It's an inspired match, the legendary royal jeweler whose works defined a privileged world and the courageous critic of the proletarian myths that transformed that world.

But enough of comparisons. Novikov — a founding member of the AptArt group, dissident Russian artists who showed in apartments — is unlike anyone in the way he manages to work kitschy, even garish textiles into minimal, lyrical statements.

In the beginning, his use of fabric was in part a practical solution to both the perpetual shortage of fine art materials for unofficial artists and to the need to make art that could be easily hidden at home or sneaked abroad. In the formal sense, however, Novikov's handling of those textiles is clever.

In the painted works, folds and creases in the background fabrics make palatable the fiction that



### TEXTILE ART:

Russian artist Timur Novikov's mixed-media work *Apollo, Ciparis & Hipakinthos* is on display at the CFA.

they represent the sea or the sky. Seams become horizon lines; background patterns reinforce messages or turn them crazily on edge. The neat, painted images Novikov discreetly places in these textile fields — pyramids, a

Greek temple, swans, a sliver of an airplane, the Leningrad skyline — attest to his mastery of scale.

The collaged pieces represent a different aspect of the work, fancier and more conceptual than

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the painted pieces. Two of the collages — tributes to the art of Faberge — were made especially for this show. They are easily recognized by their frumpy fabric backgrounds and the five-and-dime jewels and other ticky-tack that trim their central images. One of the collages combines printed images of an Imperial Easter egg with a fleshy feminine face mask designed by a Belgian artist who, like the great Faberge, catered to a turn-of-the-century aristocracy.

Rich with political implications and lush with prom-dress materials, Novikov's art is nonetheless spare, even refined in its impact. For all the wall space the works require, viewers need to step in close, as if they were approaching miniature paintings for in fact they are.

**Russian Resurgence: Recent Works by Timur Novikov** opens at noon today and runs through Jan. 3 at the Center for the Fine Arts, 101 West Flagler St., Miami. Hours: 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday (to 9 p.m. Thursday) and noon-5 p.m. Sunday. Admission is \$5. Call 375-3000.