

# Unique cultural legacy from the past returns to new life

Restored icons and paintings on show at National Art Museum, to audience's huge delight

By Victor Mikhailev

Time is connected not only by memories and events but by material artefacts. Of course, these have more relevance than being purely aesthetically pleasing; they can be spiritually enlightening. The National Art Museum is showcasing Belarusian art works from 400 years ago, newly restored and ready for viewing, thanks to the efforts of our specialists.

No doubt, our young generation should revere the legacy of their forefathers; it's a complaint we often hear today. It's no secret that most icons arrive at the museum in a very poor state, requiring prompt and careful restoration. Without this, their preservation is questionable. Those on show at the National Art Museum's *Revealing Sacred Beauty* exhibition have endured a long and careful path to restoration. Ten 17th-19th century paintings, from temper and oil, have been revived by Sergey Shatilo, Svetlana Dikut, Arkady Shpunt, Svetlana Oleshovich, Ella Pashkina and Dmitry Karlemonov. Their talent and industry have brought light back into the faces of the saints, which radiate from wooden plates. Restoration requires us to revive the original artist's intentions, avoiding distortion. Restorers reveal anew images long hidden, opening faces of 'pure beauty' to exhibition visitors.



The National Art Museum's Director, Vladimir Prokoptsov, noted at the opening ceremony that icon restoration has been possible due to financing from the Presidential Special Fund for the Support of Culture and Art. We've always had talented restorers and a restoration centre at the museum, employing professionals. They're kept busy, as the museum has over 200 unique exhibits. "The restoration centre is a unique school for our special-

ists, allowing them to pass their invaluable experience to young masters," said Mr. Prokoptsov.

The icons showcased at the present show arouse admiration, being unique. Each restoration story is impressive and none more so than that of the icon of Mother of God Odigitria, thought to date from the 18th-19th century. It was created in the village of Golyntka, in the Minsk Region. While working on it, restorers discovered that

the icon had been fully re-drawn, with the background re-painted. With later layers peeled away, it was seen that the icon was first painted in the 17th century, made at the highest professional level. Those from Zhirovichi Monastery are largely in their original form, although it's common to find multiple layers of painting on icons. Only the 'sky' background had been covered in gold in the late 19th century. During restoration, this was removed,

alongside darkened protective coverings. The process revealed bright colours from the Baroque age and unusually expressive and individual faces of apostles, close to the style of portrait painting.

The exhibition is well worth attending, being the only way to truly feel the spirituality of the time, while appreciating our rich cultural and historical heritage. Such a show cannot but arouse contemplation, making us ponder the eternal ties of history.

## Museum hosts exhibition of icons, bringing worthy admiration

# Battlefield in miniature

The *Models of the Great Patriotic War's Military Machinery* exhibition — held at the Vitebsk Regional Museum of the USSR Hero Minai Shmyrev — is showcasing miniature exhibits. Exact small copies of the military machinery used in battle are on display, based on the personal collection of Vitebsk resident Dmitry Kirillov

By Tatiana Krevtsava

"The idea was born last summer when I met guys from the Vitebsk branch of the Companion-in-Arms military-historical reconstruction club," explains the museum's Director, Irina Shishkova. "We learnt that some people in Vitebsk are involved in model-making at a very high level, using technical details from WWII and showing the weaponry used by Soviet soldiers to achieve our Great Victory."

Mr. Kirillov has been making models for over twenty years. Being passionate about his hobby, he reads avidly on his subject, comparing the smallest details of archive records and photos. "The ul-



Dmitry Kirillov discusses his models

timate achievement is authenticity. A model tank should be assembled and painted so that, on comparing it with a documentary photo, no one can distinguish it from a real prototype," says Mr. Kirillov. When he speaks of his models, it seems they must have participated in real battles. It is the central idea of the exhibition, showing models in motion, against archive military-topographical maps placed in chronological order.

Among the exhibits is the legendary KV-2 heavy tank. According to Dmitry, its prototype participated in the defence of Vitebsk, as confirmed by an archive photo (used to make the model). Also interesting are the photos of Soviet soldiers, seen in moments of

delight at capturing enemy machinery, which they display as a trophy. "I'd like our youngsters to know more about the Great Patriotic War," stresses Mr. Kirillov. "Young people should understand that war is always terrible. It's much more complicated than 'ours' and 'theirs' divided by a barricade. To be patriotic, you should know your history, so we should fill gaps in knowledge via popular means: interesting exhibitions and reconstructions. It should be done from the earliest of ages." Mr. Kirillov heads the district inspectorate for young people's affairs (for under 18s) so he

knows what he's talking about. His hobby has many times helped him in his work. In his spare time, the militia colonel heads a club for historical-military miniatures but has no desire to convert anyone to model-making. He primarily wishes to promote youngsters' interest in our history, taking them away from blindly spending time on computers or wasting precious hours hanging about on the street.

His son, Vlad, helps his father make models, using paper and cardboard. He already knows how to recreate vehicles from the past, ensuring our peaceful present.

# 'Live' and electronic musical instruments cannot be compared

By Tatiana Ponomareva

## Austrian professor donates organ to Belarusian State Academy of Music

The organ, made in the Philippines, is to find a home at the Belarusian State Academy of Music, for use in teaching students. The new conservatoire instrument is a gift from Austrian Professor Johann Trummer, an honorary doctor of the Belarusian State Academy of Music. He designed the instrument himself and made it with help from his St. Petersburg assistant.

"The organ is perfect for teaching students, suitable for all pieces, and is very compact," notes Vladimir Nevdakh, who heads the Academy's organ class. Unusually, it has an electric motor. "During the times of Bach, organ blowers were used rather than motors, with someone responsible for working the

bellows, blowing air to allow play," explains Mr. Nevdakh. Its electric motor is the only aspect which drastically distinguishes the contemporary organ from its classical ancestor.

The instrument has been long awaited by the Academy, with a special room dedicated to its use. Former pupils of Mr. Nevdakh (an organ class has existed at the Academy for a decade already) learnt on an artificial electronic organ. "The new instrument differs from the electronic in having 'live' sound and a heart. It boasts perfect tuning. An electronic organ is also good, but its sound is electronic. 'Live' and electronic instruments are incomparable," adds Mr. Nevdakh.

A concert is planned for April 27th, at the Belarusian State Academy of Music, allowing us to hear the organ played, with Mr. Trummer himself performing.