

Museum offers interesting new meetings with old acquaintances — or the ‘unknown’ artistry of well-known painters

Art exhibition at National Art Museum confirms universal truth that best works have soulful colour

By Victor Mikhailov

The major museum of the country is showcasing works by famous Belarusian painters, graphic artists and sculptors from at least a hundred years ago this year. Audiences keen on the culture, art and history in general will be able to see how artistic and conceptual priorities have changed over the course of time. The exhibition gives an individual interpretation of reality and the artistic images of times past, showing how various masters viewed life; it is a ‘roll-call’ of artistic personalities from the last century.

I feel emboldened to say that modern artists fail to draw in the same way. With this in mind, the exhibition arouses particular interest. Audiences are transported to a level of high mastery, with each artist deserving the utmost respect and recognition. Their artistic success is unrivalled and unquestioned; their legacy will be handed down through generations to come



More Than a Century showcases various works, each interesting in its content

into infinity.

Academically precise and reserved Valentin Volkov was able to portray images with convincing accuracy; he is unrivalled in his genre. His huge canvas entitled *Minsk. July 3rd, 1944* is his most significant work — currently on permanent display at the National Art Museum. No doubt, it is his most perfect work, depicting Minsk residents welcoming

Red Army soldiers who have freed the capital from the invaders. It depicts over a hundred people — each individual and well-painted. The psychological approach to the characters is the strongest angle of the picture. Each figure is uniquely characterised. Meanwhile, the latest show demonstrates Mr. Volkov in a new light. His works are less epic, including many portraits in which he confirms his ability to

reveal human character and inject his own soul into his work.

Nikita Khotulev tends to be brighter and more picturesque in his works, though using the academic style of painting. *More Than a Century* reveals his interesting manner. Other artists are also exhibited: delicate and lyrical Arkady Astapovich; Lev Leitman — who painted the ‘cloth of life’ with excitement; decisive Sergey Katkov;

artistic jeweller Konstantin Kosmachev; dramatically life asserting Mikhail Filippovich; and ‘easy talent’ Abram Ostrovsky. Pictures by impressionist Yevgeny Tikhanovich and expressively-theatrical Vladimir Starchakov neighbour those by Boris Zvinogrodsky and Nikolay Duchits — who painted Belarus’ endless landscapes. Emotional and open Abram Zaborov is showcased beside restrained and tragic Isaak Davidovich, while romantic Natan Rappoport’s pictures neighbour those by modestly feminine Olga Dedok. Mikhail Stanyuta and Vladimir Khrustalev have left just a few works for future generations but, nevertheless, have managed to create classical pieces.

The works are usually on show either permanently or via temporary exhibitions, confirming their merit. Today’s show focuses not just on well-known pictures but on those rarely seen — some ‘hidden’ for over fifty years. As a result, the exhibition demonstrates the ‘unknown’ artistry of well-known painters. For example, the museum always has famous works by Arkady Astapovich, Valentin Volkov, Lev Leitman, Mikhail Stanyuta and Mikhail Filippovich on show. However, the canvases chosen for the *More Than a Century* exhibition are rare, showing us a new side of the artists; their diverse artistic palette becomes truly apparent.

Deserved applause in Beijing

By Inessa Pleskachevskaya

7th Chopin International Piano Competition finishes in Beijing, bringing together young pianists from six countries

The programme for under 16s covered exclusively the works of the outstanding Polish composer, with just six out of twenty entrants reaching the finals. A student from the Belarusian Academy of Music’s College was among them: Special Presidential Fund scholarship holder Andrey Shichko.

We chatted to Andrey in a quiet Beijing street, full of sunlight, just after his final performance. He admits that he loves playing the piano and gains much creative satisfaction from his music but also stresses that he has much to learn. His teacher is Natalia Tashchilina but Andrey notes that he has also learnt much from the other entrants at the Beijing event. “I’ve accumulated so much experience here, listening to others and to jury members. I’ve discovered the stylistic peculiarities of Chopin’s music for myself,” notes the young pianist.

“Of course, the music is easier

for those of Slavonic nationality — Poles, Belarusians and Russians,” muses Andrey. “We’re closer to this culture so it’s easier to feel the nuances of Polish nature. Chopin’s music boasts so many

ed to play Chopin’s works and win the contest. The six finalists included Chinese and Japanese musicians, alongside one Belarusian and two Russians.

Alexey Sokolov, a jury member and Professor at the St. Petersburg and Tianjin Conservatories of Music, noted backstage, “People spoke about your boy being a genius when he was 14. It’s especially interesting for me to listen to him now, because much of what seems brilliant in a 14 year old becomes the norm by 16. They say he is already playing Rachmaninoff and Brahms.”

“Yes,” I respond. “He’s played Rachmaninoff’s third piano concerto with the Belarusian Symphony Orchestra.”

“Third? This is a very serious level,” asserts Mr. Sokolov.

Meanwhile, ‘serious’ Andrey Shichko dreams of becoming a concert pianist with a world famous name; it’s a dream he could fulfil, having already received ovations in St. Petersburg, Kaliningrad, Paris and Vienna. This time, Beijing applauded him, with the judges of the prestigious competition calling Andrey a virtuoso and forecasting a brilliant future.



Andrey Shichko meets with applause

national aspects and motifs, embracing Polish dance and images. Of course, if you’re talented and gifted, guided by a good teacher and truly devoted to music, it doesn’t matter whether you’re Chinese or American. It’s not difficult if you have your heart set on understanding the music.”

Certainly, not only Slavs want-

Continuing traditions of Kirill and Mefody

By Olga Bogacheva

Vitebsk’s Regional Local History Museum hosts exhibition of rare Orthodox books, dedicated to Day of Slavonic Written Language and Culture

The Day of Orthodox Written Language is celebrated on May 24th — commemorating the memory of saints Kirill and Mefody. As Christian preachers, the brothers headed to Moravia to convert the Slavs, at the order of the Byzantine Emperor, in 863. They compiled the first Slavonic alphabet and translated Church order of service books into Slavonic, laying the foundations for Slavonic written language and culture.

Two halls of Vitebsk’s museum are displaying over 40 editions, including order of service books and spiritual and moral literature. The most interesting exhibits include a copy of the Pochaev Lavra Gospel from 1758, 19th century festive Menaians with ‘hooked’ records, a 1916 Bible with coloured engravings and a 1957 album depicting patriarchs of Moscow and all Russia.

A reproduction of a 16th century book, entitled *The Life of Saint Blessed Duke Alexander Nevsky* is



on show, alongside a hand-written Psalter and Apocalypse Commentary by St. Andrew of Caesarea (19th century). The collection is expanded with contemporary Orthodox and service literature, children’s editions and others from Vitebsk’s Eparchy. Copies of editions originally printed by Frantsisk Skorina, Vasily Tyapinsky and Simeon Polotsky, alongside those from Kuteino Monastery’s printing house near Orsha, give us a clear view of the first printed editions in Belarus.

Items from archaeological digs occupy a special place in the exhibition: book clasps found in Vitebsk, a 12th-13th century ‘stylus’ (a sharp, pointed instrument used for writing, marking or engraving) and a 13th-14th century birchbark manuscript — the first found in Belarus. Visitors to the museum can expand their knowledge of the history and development of Slavonic written language.