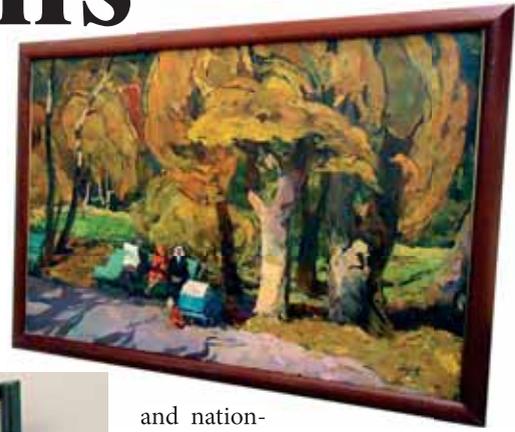


Rich palette of emotions and natural beauty

As part of the *Our Collections* project, National Art Museum shows dazzling Belarusian landscape paintings



Free Land Spaces exhibition, at National Art Museum, arouses interest among visitors

By Victor Mikhailov

Landscapes played a particularly significant role in Belarusian pictorial art in the second half of the 20th century, marked by artists who had gained prominence over preceding years. Even today, the genre remains one of the ultimate mediums for expressing patriotic love through high technical mastery. Its roots are founded in the 19th century, with artists continuing their development through the first decades of the 20th century.

Many of the current works on display date from the 1950s, when social realism ruled -- firmly established from the 1930s onwards. The poetic notion of social transformations and images of Belarusian villages found focus in the mid-20th century -- typified by the works of Vitold Byalynitsky-Birulya, Ivan Akhremchik, Nikolay Duchits, Yevgeny Zaitsev, Nikolay Tarasikov, Galina Azgur, Valentin Dzezhits,

Piotr Daneliya and Vladimir Kudrevich. Picturesque scenes enjoyed delicate palettes, with many created outside, exploring the subtleties of artists' emotional response to their environment.

Studying the exhibited works, it's clear that their imaginative interpretation is an evolution of the strict landscape style, leading to the new manner of the 1960s, with its monumental-and-etude vision. Nature was viewed as reflecting our moral and historical experience and as demonstrating features unique to Belarus. The rhythm of everyday life and the tragedy of the past war were also major philosophical themes -- as explored by



Valentin Savitsky, Victor Versotsky, Sergey Katkov, Nikolay Kazakevich, Leonid Shchemelev, Nikolay Nazarenko, Pavel Maslenikov, Vasily Sumarev, Mikhail Blishch and Izrail Basov.

A decade later, a romantic trend prevailed in landscape painting, with panoramic views, ornamentation and glorification of nature prominent -- as seen in works by Vitaly Tsvirko, Boris Arakcheev, Anatoly Shibnev, Anton Barkhatkov and Leonid Dudarenko.

From 1975 to 1985, the landscape genre became more narrative in nature, with artists expressing their own individual world outlook on canvas. Artists combined folklore

and national-romantic motifs in creating their image of Belarusian nature -- as typified by Gavriil Vashchenko, Nikolay Seleshchuk, Ivan Rei, Victor Gromyko, Leonid Shchemelev, Ivan Stasevich, Vladimir Tovstik, Boris Kazakov, Konstantin Khoroshevich and Natalia Chernogolovaya.

Soon, landscape works combined poetry, conceptual and philosophical themes, and symbolism. After the disaster at the Chernobyl nuclear power station, the topic of ecology became popular with painters of all generations and styles. Landscape art played a significant role, with metaphorical images used by Gavriil Vashchenko, Vyacheslav Volynets, Nikolay Bushchik, Andrey Zadorin, Anatoly Kuznetsov, Vladimir Kozhukh and Alexander Ksendzov.

From 1990 to the early 21st century, Belarusian painters developed an interest in the idea of preserving our national culture, which gave a new emotional colouring to the landscape motif. Their generalised images and more concrete details were penetrated with deep lyrical-poetical feelings. This was reflected especially brightly in pieces by Gavriil Vashchenko, Victor Tikhonov, Oleg Skovorodko, Valery Shkarubo, Vladimir Kozhukh and Vladimir Zinkevich.

Realism remained a foundation of the Belarusian landscape genre from the 1950s through to the early 21st century, exploring figurative ideas while reflecting the social and natural environment.

The *Free Land Spaces* exhibition showcases 75 artworks, giving us a wonderful opportunity to observe the trends and development of the landscape genre from the second half of the 20th century to the early 21st century.

Vladimir Zhbanov's philosophical 'Stargazer'

Belarusian cities hardly to be imagined without this sculptor's works

By Lyudmila Rubanova

Mr. Zhbanov's works include the well-known 'Unknown Woman', 'Getting a Light', 'Girl with Umbrella' -- found in Mikhailovsky Park (near the Railway Station), 'Lady with Dog' -- near Komarovsky Market, and 'Carriage' -- near the Town Hall. One of his last pieces -- 'Buyers' -- has been installed near TsUM (central department store). His 'Golden Trefoil' fountain has appeared in Molo-dechno, while his bronze 'Stargazer' observes the constellations from Mogilev. As the author said, his 'Stargazer' is designed to inspire musings on eternity, the cosmos and our role

within the universe...

His light-hearted, ironical and life-like sculptures are so beloved that people often touch them for luck, use them as rendezvous points and like to have their photo taken beside them. To many, his bronze sculptures are so much part of our streets and squares that it seemed new works would continue to grace them for many years to come, arousing delight, surprise and disputes. However, unexpectedly, sculptor Vladimir Zhbanov has died.

It may be symbolic that most of Mr. Zhbanov's works are to be found in Minsk, as it was his city. He was born there in 1954, to a military family, attending Minsk's Art Col-



'Stargazer' sculpture in Mogilev's street

lege (named after Glebov). He later graduated from the Belarusian State Theatre and Art Institute -- also studying at the Academy of Arts of the USSR. He was sent to Afghanistan as an ordinary soldier and then worked as a teacher.

In one interview, Mr. Zhbanov said, "Wherever I look, I see sculptures to either arouse smiles or the desire to touch and admire." His works are loved by all and, surely, even those who grumbled at the sight of so many of his works in the capital, will come to cherish his legacy. He once said, "Why should I look back? Time and history will show. I'll be creating as long as I have strength."