



Anatoly Kuznetsov:

‘I should see that which others don’t’

Famous Belarusian artist’s personal exhibition — *The Way* — hosted by Palace of Arts Republican Art Gallery, devoted to 35th anniversary of his creative work

By Victor Mikhailov

Anatoly Kuznetsov’s painting style is not to everyone’s taste, being abstract and avant-garde. He transfers his imaginative thoughts meticulously yet indirectly, which is what intrigues many of his fans. A great number gathered for the opening of his exhibition, which saw various speeches from colleagues, art historians and critics. There was a true river of praise.

The exhibition is certainly an event in the cultural year for Belarus and for the international art community. Mr. Kuznetsov appeared calm — even distanced from the admiration and praise. Of course, he was interested to hear others’ opinions on his works but this is not what drives him to paint.

Mr. Mironova, a professor at the Belarusian State Academy of Arts, noted, “Paintings, like poems, don’t need to be unambiguous to be impressive. In this respect, the works of Mr. Kuznetsov are unrivalled among his contemporaries, emitting great energy. At a glance, we see thousands of colour stains, fixed into lines and small particles, which give the impression of movement, time and space: a cosmic interpretation of the emotions of joy and sorrow, peace and anxiety, passion and suffering, insight and blindness. The canvases’ colossal scale and countless number of elements, in form and colour, unite impressively. Mr. Kuznetsov’s works are a valuable contribution to 20th-21st century art and I’m sure that his paintings will become even more appreciated in coming centuries.”

Anatoly Kuznetsov’s contemplation of the world is embodied on huge canvases, filled with associations and moods. Through this exploration, his soul is born again through art. Truly, he not only gives an impression of external existence

but creates a new world, as never seen before.

His work is intuitive. “When I come to a blank canvas, I don’t know what will appear, as images are born through improvisation,” he explains. We see hints of objects and contours which fade and dissolve, as if releasing us from all that is substantial. His mind is focused on spiritual experiences, thoughts and feelings so, to understand

of an imposed theme and have learned to think subconsciously. I’m led by sounds and my sense of taste; our ears can ‘see’. I love colour, since I feel that it communicates sadness and joy and every nuance of feeling.

Do you imagine your future audience while painting, hoping that they’ll understand your motivation?

To be honest, I’m trying to hear and understand myself. If I

non-objective is almost impossible to find. Europe long ago lost its wealth of abstractionism, for which you need to understand your own internal state. I know my priorities: colour, colour and colour! It has its own rhythm and direction. Of course, to avoid stagnation, you need to develop. I do shift my vision but do so organically, rather than suddenly.

If we compare the Be-

to use the laws of academic art is absolutely stunning. They are our Belarusian artists.

When you studied at the Minsk Art School, you were yet to develop the style we associate with you today.

Of course, style comes with time and experience.

Did your teachers understand you?

Yes.

Were some less under-

ing needs to be completed, which requires a lot of effort: physical and mental. There are difficult times often, when I can’t create the right colour or image and become frustrated. However, the next day, I come to the studio and work again. Eventually, my goal is reached.

Do your paintings have names?

Yes, of course. They are all part of cycles. ‘White Suite’ is figurative and portrays stages of life. I also have cycles entitled ‘Colourful Spaces’ and ‘Vibrations of Light’. Unexpectedly, I was inspired to create ‘Valley of the Pharaohs’ — on the theme of Egypt.

I assume that most of your works come from your inner imagination and only partly from external sources. What inspires you?

When nerves are connected, they form a joint. It’s impossible to say clearly why this happens in a certain way. Where do ideas come from? We can’t explain but I’d say experience. Each day brings so many. I can easily draw trees, houses and reflections in water and I do paint from life, but I try to see what others do not. I should see that which others don’t.

Are you an optimist?

I don’t think so, though I’m positive by nature.

Do you spend much time adjusting your works?

Of course, as not everything is perfect at first. I’m quite meticulous when it comes to colour. If I can’t match two colours, I can’t leave a canvas and have to keep working. I start spontaneously so it’s hard to take a step back and look at work objectively but I do sit without a brush for an hour and think and look. It’s a useful process, as being an artist is not a profession, it’s a state. You have to delve deep within yourself and ignore ideas of popularity. I tell young people the same thing: follow your heart. My teacher told me: ‘Painting is a woman who never forgives betrayal’.



Anatoly Kuznetsov’s works draw attention with their colour and structural rhythm

his soul, we must not only see his pictures, but listen to him.

What motivates you to strive for creative freedom?

I love colour, which gives me an immediate feeling of excitement.

You prefer to paint in an abstract style presumably because you find it more meaningful?

For a long time, I’ve been moving away from the confines of figurative art. Naturally, this eventually led me to abstraction or, rather, non-objective painting. I’ve rid myself of the dictates

can do so, I may be able to share my emotions and gain communion with others: not everyone — perhaps a dozen. Many of my friends want to talk about artistic issues, so we chat and I reveal my thoughts. At personal exhibitions, I’m always present, taking part in discussions and ‘round tables’ to help people understand me. Those, who do not want to understand, just don’t come.

Is it difficult to find ‘your’ audience and does it worry you?

Of course, every artist has their own audience. Sadly, realistic art is everywhere while

Belarusian school of painting and that of modern Europe, we can see that artists there tend to choose non-objective painting...

That’s what I’m speaking of. They seem to desire freedom, as is obvious; however, freedom has a price and needs to be curbed to some extent. We have plenty of talented artists in Belarus, many of whom live in France, Holland and Belgium. They are known, each working in different directions, but with a level of literacy. They are part of a tradition: our wonderful school. Their ability

standing?

I wasn’t a dissident. I worked normally, studied and was diligent. I do not consider myself to be a pure avant-garde artist and have no conscious intention to turn the world upside-down. I just paint in a way which is true to myself.

Artists spend much time in their studio alone. What thoughts come to you during the creative process?

I have many thoughts. I often think of giving up, as it’s such hard work and everything must be created from scratch. A paint-

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