

# Homeland is always closest to the heart

People's Artist of Belarus Victor Gromyko delights all with exhibition dedicated to his 90th birthday, hosted by the National Art Museum



V. Gromyko and Culture Minister B. Svetlov



By Victor Mikhailov

One says about people of Mr. Gromyko's that they survived. His generation was tested fiercely by war and all its hardships. In 1941, he became a member of the underground partisan organisation in Orsha, before becoming a scout, a machine gunner and, even, a commissioner with a special services detachment. He later edited *Narodnye Mstiteli* newspaper. Behind this military biography lay great effort, courage and dignity. The war revealed his inexhaustible zest for life, which found fruition in his rich creativity as an artist in the years ahead.

Mr. Gromyko's works explore life's meaning and our need for spiritual ideals — as is fitting for an artist. His historical and heroic paintings, large-scale epic landscapes and psychological portraits are masterpieces.

Born on January 2nd, 1923, in the Mogilev Region, he has now celebrated his 90th birthday, honoured as a master of painting at the National Art Museum in Minsk. The anniversary exhibition is entitled *To See the Whole Earth* and features his most famous works, some almost seventy years old, alongside those from recent years. There are more than 60 canvases in all.

Even at 90, he is full of creative energy, spending

all his free time painting. He can't live without his passion. Even during the war, in the trenches, he sketched portraits of fellow soldiers in between skirmishes. Over the decades, he passed his knowledge on to many generations of students: a job he views as far from easy. "Being a teacher is one of the most difficult jobs. To teach art is twice as hard. Above all, you need to teach about life and character and being true to yourself. Only then will success come," he

**Personal exhibition in honour of his 90th birthday sees People's Artist of Belarus Victor Gromyko showing only part of his creative works yet still delighting fans**



noted at the grand opening of his anniversary exhibition.

Of course, even this landmark exhibition in the main museum of the country does not contain all his works, which are owned by foreign museums and private collectors around the

globe. The current exhibition features many bright, conceptual works: *Soldiers, 1941*; *Over the Pripjat, Dedicated to the Women of the Great Patriotic War*; and *Apples of the Crop of 1941*. They show his heartfelt philosophical, moral and aesthetic ideals, as well as

his love for his homeland and the unique beauty of Belarus. He connects this with the living memory of people's heroism.

His eye sweeps the horizon of each landscape as if seeing the whole earth, with its endless expanse of hills. His palette is both rich and

piercingly bright, showing the Belarusian landscape to be like no other. He portrays its scenery with emotion and drama — as is evident from the works on display at the anniversary exhibition.

Victor Gromyko's realism comes to the fore in his portraits, even from his earliest works: *Old Man, Grandmother* and *The Belarusians*. Many are classics of Belarusian post-war art, featuring images of his own father, as well as of writer Yanka Bryl, stage actor Yevgeny Chemodurov and writer Vasil Bykov, whose huge portrait is expressively dramatic.

His landscapes used colour with more emotion and drama over time — as evinced by *Rainbow over the Church*. Another, *Indestructible Hieroglyph of the Pacific Coast of Japan*, has an unexpected edge, surveying the specific features of this alien land. Like his

Kazakh and Hungarian cycles, it is vividly painted, giving the sense not only of the vastness of our wonderful world but a deep sense of blood friendship. Such is his spiritual maturity.

Mr. Gromyko is also a writer. His *Rainbow over the Road* details his particularly eventful childhood, his bravery military youth and his contribution to our victory over Fascism. The autobiography was followed by *Sun behind Clouds* and *Light and Shadows of the Outgoing Century*, which explore Minsk's post war reconstruction and the foundation of Minsk Art College and the Belarusian State Theatre and Art Institute. We also hear of the establishment of the National Art Museum and the Artists' Union of Belarus and Art Fund, as well as the creation of the largest memorials. He writes precisely, with vivid imagery, giving us a compelling portrait of Belarusian figures of art and culture — such as Valentin Volkov, Ivan Akhremchik, Vitaly Tsvirko, and one of the first leaders of the National Art Museum, Yelena Aladova, whom he writes of with special attention and love.

Clearly, on the eve of his 90th birthday, Victor Gromyko retains his creative spark. He tells us that more paintings yet live within him, proving that art is his life, running through his blood and bones.