



Minsk Palace of Arts runs exhibition showing bright palette of Belarusian masterpieces

Golden collection in all its magnificence

Late 20th century legends of national painting from Minsk's Belarusian Union of Artists' archives on show at Palace of Arts



Izrail Basov's *Rhythm of the City*



Alexander Kishchenko's *Still Life*

By Victor Mikhailov

More than a hundred works from the rich archives of the Belarusian Union of Artists are on show at the Palace of Arts. Its exhibition space is one of the largest countrywide, now featuring some canvases on public display for the very first time since purchase.

People's Artist of Belarus Gavriil Vashchenko, almost half a century ago, helped set up the Fund, as he recollected at the exhibition's opening ceremony. "I found works which I, and my friends who worked with me in the Secretariat of the Belarusian Union of Artists, collected for future generations. I'm not ashamed of the colleagues who worked at that time. It's wonderful that the administration of today has chosen to show this interesting collection, which features artists of various generations," Mr. Vashchenko emphasised.

The mastery of Anton Barkhatkov, Leonid Shchemelev and Alexander Kishchenko is evident at first sight. Although summer is not considered to be the best time to see exhibitions, such an event is impossi-

ble to miss. There was an age of monumental canvases, as rarely seen today, when works are more commercially oriented and few state orders exist.

People's Artist of Belarus Vladimir Tolstik, "The term 'Socialist Realism' is rarely heard in the West, where they refer to 'Soviet Impressionism'. Such works are often considered to be poor quality but much depended on the artist. Of course, they captured their time in their own style."

July's usual cultural off-season has been broken by the Palace of Arts' show; these works from the Belarusian Union of Artists are like creative fireworks, as is suitable in marking the Union's 70th anniversary. Its archive includes the best works by Belarusian masters, as were selected from various exhibitions by a commission of experts from the Ministry of Culture. Sadly, most were never exhibited, with so many decades passing until today's exhibition and their public unveiling.

Today, these works are recognised as classics of Belarusian art, featuring canvases by Vitaly Tsvirko, Nikolay Seleshchuk, Zoya Litvinova, Victor Gromyko and Victor Sakhnenko. Only a few date from the 1970s and 1980s. The



Zoya Litvinova's *Presenting Temptation*

Belarusian Union of Artists perhaps boasts the richest national archive, not only of paintings but



In focus: Leonid Shchemelev's *Vesnyanskoe Field*

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graphics, sculpture and works of applied and decorative arts. Even the Chairman of the Belarusian Union of Artists, Vladimir Savich, cannot give an exact number to the treasures but believes that Borisov alone has about 800 works. Almost 3,000 were once distributed for temporary storage.

The decision of the administration of the Belarusian Union of Artists to show the best works from its collection — these national treasures of art — is, of course, correct. As noted at the exhibition opening, today's artists can only benefit from viewing the masterpieces of their predecessors.

Leonid Khabotov, Deputy

Chairman for Exhibition Activity, at the Belarusian Union of Artists, "Our wide-ranging works encompass Belarusian philosophy and mentality, through the use of colour and form. Here, you can find answers to all life's questions."

Some of the original artists attended the opening ceremony and were intrigued to be reunited with their old works. We can only ponder what thoughts crossed their minds on viewing those pictures. Amateur art lovers and professionals enjoyed a feast for the eyes at the exhibition, which has something for everyone.

Nevertheless, the hall was not crowded on the first day and we can only surmise that July is not the best month for drawing people inside. Autumn days of mist and rain are a better time for such



Valeriana Zholtak's *Ashberry*

pursuits. The lack of attendance cannot surely indicate people's lack of interest; anyone working in a creative field would be enriched. However, the organisers of the exhibition plan similar shows twice a year, and not only in the capital. The Chairman of the Belarusian Union of Artists Vladimir Savich tells us that an exhibition is to open in Gomel, featuring 100 works, with the show then touring the country and perhaps going abroad. He explains, "We must promote communication between artists of different generations." He is hopeful that young artists will attend, being inspired by their predecessors.