

# Ultimate exposure of Tsesler's paradoxes

Minsk Modern Fine Arts Museum's *Practice of Market Realism* exhibition, on show for past month, features Vladimir Tsesler's kitsch household items and ironic art



Vladimir Tsesler's works can hardly be accused of lacking originality



ably they bring to us thoughts that the spiritual dominates over the material. You might think that such philosophies are rather inaccessible but Mr. Tsesler is a master of light irony, poking fun at everyday situations. Meanwhile, the perfectness of fulfilment and special minimalism of expressive means indicates to huge preparatory work. His succinct expressions are the work of many hours, days and weeks; such metaphors are not created on a whim, requiring much thought, even though they may seem simple at first.

Mr. Tsesler's paintings, sculptures and other art objects present us with paradoxes. His *Project of the Century: Twelve out of XX* sculptures are joined by posters, the *Vector Technologies* series of art objects, a number of design concepts, and the series *Hollywood Jolly* and *Classroom*. Many of the pieces were only created last year.

We live in a market economy which influences the direction of all art, regardless of our own inclinations. Any artist who denies this commercial aspect is lying, just trying to sell himself at a higher price. We all compromise and reach bargains to some degree but this doesn't stop audiences from admiring our work' explained Mr. Tsesler who spoke from the screen of a TV set in the exhibition hall, explaining the concepts behind his work.

One may think that the higher the painter's intellectual level is, the more afford-

is to encourage us to examine our society objectively: to



know ourselves' as the Greeks would say. Only then can we grow. From the TV screen, he

rhythmic compositions while also providing us with an opportunity of its aesthetic apprehension. The eternal horizontal

of civilisation's communication unwinds behind and before us, from the Himalayas to the Amazon jungle. We are like fish on the line; we may struggle, but we cannot escape. In a world where any place can be reduced to a mark on a satellite image and the wonders of the universe seem, falsely, within our grasp, Mt. Tsesler suggests that we re-evaluate our own significance. His *I — Pixel* challenges us to realise that all is not what it seems. Where space seems cold and distant, in fact, colour, light and warmth can be found, if we find a more personal response.

Lubok-style woodcuts and lithographs became the cheap art of the people from ancient times till the mid-20th century, decorating inns and private homes. Apparently simple folk depictions often hid satirical intentions. Mr. Tsesler revived the technique and technology of the genre in the early 1990s, using its childlike visual appeal to create his own satires, in his attic in Minsk's Pervomaiskaya Street. He applied the style to modern plots with innocent ease. Hand-drawn pictures, created on grey wrapping paper and painted with bright aniline paints, helped painters earn their living in the post-perestroika time when there were no orders at all; such situation could happen a hundred or even hundred years ago. Contemporary plots were easily transposed by Tsesler into a pictorial system of ancient funny pictures and into the stylistics of Lubok texts.

Viewing the *Vector Space Technologies* display of abstract art objects, I feel that it's inspired by the rhythms of industrial civilisation, which continue to extend their pulse today, in ways obvious and hidden. Patterns are all around us, from the call signals of news programmes to the equal intervals of motorway supports. These knock subconsciously yet mercilessly at our soul — from birth until death. Apparently invisible and inaudible, these abstract rhythms guide us through life. Mr. Tsesler's monumental black-and-white posters from the *Vector Space Technologies* series reflect the structural essence of artificially created nature in abstract

In fact, Mr. Tsesler made his first linocut lithograph at seven years old, studying at the children's art studio in his

hometown of Slutsk. Despite, cutting his hand, he finished the picture: an illustration of *Lukomorie* by Pushkin. The genre has poked fun at such figures as Peter I, Rasputin, Lenin and Krupskaya, Leonardo da Vinci and Matisse, as well as less familiar characters (a pioneer or a Unorthodox Ninja), in addition to characters from contemporary folk mythology: legendary kings, strange animals and mermaids.

The 20th century was full of paradoxes: the triumph of intellect and technology set against wars of unprecedented scale and destruction. It was the epoch of information boom and violation of any canons and taboos. The information revolution has opened doors, where some should remain closed. It opened the cosmic era while really threatening life on the planet. He doubted the value of culture and expanded its borders while generating a whole range of new areas and names. Our eyes look to the stars, while ignoring death on our doorstep. Mr. Tsesler's works include twelve sculptures of the most influential artists of the 20th century; in their faces we see the fate of millions — guided by their works. These show unexpected facets to future generations while giving impulse to new creations. The project is presented like a system of equal and self-sufficient elements which are united by a common module and common spatial orientation. Set inside an egg shaped structure (21cm x 30cm), the shape symbolises life, birth and the act of creation. Each is a container of concentrated energy, inspiring us into the future. *Project of the Century* is a simultaneous farewell and an expression of gratitude. The eggs are the same size as a human fetus in the womb: the ultimate creation.

Mr. Tsesler is a true man of his time: he is born of the past, exists in the present and looks to the future, yet with eyes focused on that which few others see.

