

Brush of artist, hand of restorer

Alcohols, solvents and lacquers are pushed aside. Brushes are gathered in a jar. An old working apron hangs on a peg. Svetlana Dikut welcomes her visitors. Today she is not only a restorer, but also a guide — manager of the oil painting department of the National Art Museum — who will tell students and *The MT* correspondent how she ‘treats’ pictures. This comparison is not casual. In her conversations, she constantly compares restoration to medicine.

By Natalia Stepanova

The premises where Ms. Dikut works reminds one of an art studio. Pictures hang on the walls, stand on easels and supports. Beside them there are brushes and paints. The mistress shows her latest work — the *Acatistus of the Mother of God*. It is in the final stage of restoration. For comparison, there is a photo which initially fell into her hands: the third part of the picture with special sealing tape [it is papered] which is usually put in order to prevent the fall of paint on damaged places.

“Before we start working, the restoration council meets,” the guide tells. “The expert puts forward an option for the restoration of the work and the others agree or deny. Problems solving is developed and the document with the list of actions is made.”

“The feature of this particular picture is that the canvas is sewn in two places. It is also one of the reasons for the damage. However, the basic reason is that the work was stored without a stretcher for a long time. My task is to restore the lost parts, without destroying the author’s concept, and also without lowering the historical value of the work. This picture has already endured three restorations.”

Svetlana Dikut then moves on to the subtleties of her work. It is interesting to her students, but it is hardly necessary to foist it upon the readership. However, one, simple aspect that we will dwell on is ‘sounding’ — the purpose of defining, how to better treat the ‘patient’. In this particular case, the help of chemists is needed. They suggest what material is better to use for a particular piece. The work usually starts with light solvents, then, if it is necessary, more complicated sol-

vents are used.

“Sometimes it is possible to remove dirty spots using a small piece of cotton covered in solvent, but occasionally it is necessary to apply a



Restorer Svetlana Dikut

compress,” the restorer tells. “It is like the same illness for different people — an individual approach is necessary.”

“And what case was the most difficult in your practice?,” I ask.

“Each case is uniquely difficult,” she answers with a smile, and tells about the most remembered case.

“And do you have constant ‘patients’?,” a student enquired.

“Here on the table is a picture — *Poppies* by Nikolai Zalozny,” Svetlana Dikut gestures. “The picture has technological problems created by the author in the course of painting the picture, that’s why it periodically delaminates. Sometimes it happens that this ‘patient’ does not come to me for years, but then sometimes it comes every six months.”

The expert also tells about one interesting case — *Portrait of E. Zolotarevsky* painted by Zinaida Serebryakova, niece of the great Alexandre Benois.

“This work was hanging for a long time in our exposition under small sealing tapes,” the restorer recalls. “It is interesting that in all catalogues which I have seen, including foreign ones, it was in such a state. During a thorough examination it became clear that the process of strengthening of paint layer

hard times for the family, she took an already used canvas and the simplest paints,” she explains.

“I was confused, seeing a dark-blue blind background, which is not characteristic to this artist. It was found out that someone simply painted over it, because the paints started to fall and because this was done carelessly.

Restorers have to face such cases.

This picture was sold to the National Art Museum by relatives of the boy depicted on it. Actually, the museum collection was replenished in various ways. Some works were brought from expeditions across cities and lands of our country at the end of the last century, where they were found in old dilapidated houses and churches. It is clear that they were stored in bad conditions, frequently with birds and rats together under the one roof.”

The description of the skills of Belarusian restorers would be incomplete without the next picture. Svetlana Dikut’s once dealt with *Portrait of Sheremetev* painted by Fiodor Rokotov. At that time the portrait was being prepared for an exhibition of Russian portraits *Witnesses of Time*.

“Before we got it, this picture had been in hands of amateurs,” Ms. Dikut tells. “I always say, that even time is not so cruel to art, as the hand of non-professionals. It was very hard work. It is important, while removing old paint, not to remove anything superfluous and, during restoration to preserve the author as much as possible. As a result the original Rokotov was revealed to us.”

An hour rushes by for the students and me. It seems that Svetlana Dikut can endlessly discuss her passion of restoration. But we did not want to encroach any more on her precious time. This doctor always has a lot of patients.

Famous suprematist work returns to Vitebsk’s centre

By Alena Tikhonova

Young artists paint the building wall using Kazimir Malevich’s drawing

This is the third attempt to paint the famous drawing *Death to Wallpaper* on the house wall. The drawing itself was created by Malevich in 1919 to decorate the building of the studio in Bukharinskaya Street (now, Pravdy Street).

The first attempt to bring Malevich’s idea into life took place in 1992, when members of Vitebsk’s Kvadrat (Square) Creative Association of Artists painted Malevich’s draw-

ing on the building wall, located at the crossroads of Lenin and Pravdy streets. This is not the house that Malevich wanted to paint but it has stood in Vitebsk since the time of UN-OVIS (avant-garde artistic association, created by Kazimir Malevich) and is situated in close vicinity to the studio, where the prominent artist used to work.

However, the painting was created with unstable materials (gouache with glue) and, over the years, gradually disappeared from the wall. In 2010, painters Dukhovnikov, Vyshka and Chuikova, as well as students of artistic departments of Vitebsk’s universi-



Wall painting based on Kazimir Malevich’s sketch

ties painted the wall again.

Now, after the repair, the drawing will grace the central part of the city for the third time. Students from the De-

sign Department at Vitebsk’s State Technological University joined young Vitebsk painters to take part in the artistic event.

Top prize for best dance

By Anatoly Govorov

Bolshoi Theatre of Belarus soloists win international contest in Istanbul

Leading stage masters, Lyudmila Khitrova and Konstantin Geronik, became the winners of the top prize. In June, these dancers were also awarded high state awards — Frantsisk Skorina medals.

The first award of the competition was won by the ballet soloist Takatoshi Machiyama, while Yana Shtangei, a graduate of the Belarusian State Choreographic Gymnasium-Col-

lege and a participant of *Junior Eurovision-2013* Song Contest, came second.

The mastery of the entrants was assessed by the artistic director of the Berlin State Ballet, Vladimir Malakhov; the chair of the jury of the International Ballet Competition in Seoul; prima ballet dancer of the Rome Opera ballet troupe, Letizia Giuliani; artistic director of the International OTR Ballet Competition in Vienna, Evelyn Teri, and others. The jury was headed by the outstanding dancer — artistic director of the Greek National Opera Ballet, Irek Mukhamedov.