

# Beautiful and greatly imaginative feeling for our reality

20th Century Belarusian Still-Life, from Belarus' National Art Museum's collection, showcases picturesque paintings drawn in the last century

By Victor Mikhailov

The museum's funds include over 200 picturesque pictures drawn in the 20th century by Belarusian masters, in the still-life genre (translated literally from 'nature morte' as dead nature), with most painted in the second half of the century. Their number would be more were it not for the revolutions, destructive wars and social cataclysms which Belarus experienced in the first half of the 20th century. Many works were either destroyed or removed from the country.

Objectively, it's worth mentioning that, in the first half of the last century, still-life painting wasn't popular among Belarusian artists; they tended to prefer portraiture, landscapes or thematic pictures. However, the few pictures kept by the museum do reflect different trends in the genre's development. These existed within the framework of Soviet Social Realism, in the early 1930s. In particular, the present show includes works by such famous Belarusian painters as A. Astapovich, F. Doroshevich, V. Yasinsky, N. Tarasikov and D. Porokhnya. Many are on show to the public for the first time.

In the 1950s, after the huge economic and spiritual damage caused by the Great Patriotic War, Belarusian artistic life became

stronger. City and national exhibitions were organised, alongside all-Union shows (held for the whole USSR). Figurative, historical pictures reigned at such shows but still-life paintings gradually gained status in Belarusian fine art. This genre occupied a significant place in the artistry of many Belarusian painters, though not dominating. Still-life pictures were inspired by life, showing its true beauty.

The present show in-



Still-life works by Valeriana Zholtok bear obvious attractions

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pictures have outer beauty, being pleasing to the eye, with delicate colours and sharp details.

In the second half of the 20th century, Belarus lived through a sharp artistic uplift. New aesthetic ideals were formed, while artistry was enriched with the achievements of global culture; to a certain degree, this resulted in stylistic diversity. Masters of the older and medium generation continued the

Easel art works acquired monumental dimensions and paintings began to draw on elements of the monumental and upon decorative art. Works by Gavriil Vashchenko, Valeriana Zholtok, Yadviga Rozdzyalovskaya and Algerd Malishevsky, among others, were characterised by concise, broad brushstrokes and unusual sculptural content.

Still-life painting began to occupy a dominating position for some painters, with the creativity of Valeriana Zholtok and Yadviga Rozdzyalovskaya especially noteworthy. They created still-life paintings in their own way and according to their own temperament; they differed in their concept, but remained impeccable in their use of harmonious colour. Ms. Zholtok's works are predominantly cheerful, depicting decorative objects of large-scale, while Ms. Rozdzyalovskaya is known for her intimacy of outlook.

In the 1970s-1980s, philosophical and intellectual trends in the interpretation of images were amplified in Belarusian painting, with a significant role played by symbols and allegory. Many painters asserted their individuality by applying a vivid manner and an original style: Viktor Sakhnenko, Algerd Malishevsky, Nikolay Opiek, Leonid Shchemlev, Anatoly Kuznetsov and Alexander Kishchenko, among others.

At that time, Gavriil Vashchenko's talent became obvious. His works (including still-life paintings) were characterised by a profound philosophy, based on a deep national identity.

Simply put, still-life painting became the equal of any other genre. Belarusian pictures in this genre were inspired by traditional folk motifs. Outstanding landscape painter Vitaly Tsvirko is a particularly good example. In the 1980s, he shifted to still-life painting, helping expand the framework of Belarusian artists' creativity.

A decade later, artists were keen to throw off the shackles of the past. Still-life painting became characterised by poetry, philosophy, conceptuality and associativity — as confirmed by the works of Nikolay Bushchik, Alexander Grishkevich, Alexander Kishchenko, Anatoly Kuznetsov and Georgy Poplavsky (also on show).

Still-life works have no need of verbal descriptions, speaking for themselves. We can comprehend the actual painting, admiring our world, its beauty, strength and depth. Hidden meaning is not always necessary in art. The essence of still-life is man's relation with his surroundings; we can view the world objectively, gaining clarity of understanding and a sense of reality.



Yadviga Rozdzyalovskaya's still-life painting

cludes still-life paintings from the 1950s, created by Valentin Volkov, Valeriana Zholtok, Sofia Lee, Natan Voronov, Adolf Gugel and Alexander Shevchenko. Many boast traces of an old, academic understanding of the genre: their positioning and equilibrium. The showcased

traditions of the Belarusian school of painting formed earlier, in the style of Ivan Akhremchik, Boris Arakcheev and Genrikh Brzhozovsky. Meanwhile, young artists adopted a 'severe style' (born into the Soviet fine arts in the 1950s-1960s, they were the antithesis of the 'polished' style of the previous years).

## Impressive charm of mysterious nights

Artist Sergey Timokhov presents works in Mogilev and Minsk

Mr. Timokhov has been creating nudes since the late 1990s, reflecting the beauty of the human body, although no one has ever posed for him. "Beauty itself inspires me," he admits. "It can only truly be depicted in colour but I wanted to use a black-and-white graphic style; I hope I've succeeded."

Many of the master's works are created in ink, but he is keen to combine oil and

pencils. "Some magic is inherited in nature. Our ancestors used to worship its grandeur and mightiness," notes Mr. Timokhov. "Before cutting a tree, they asked Lesovik (a male woodland spirit in Slavic mythology) for permission. It's necessary now to remember this harmony."

*Night's Charms* has opened at the Vitold Byalynitsky-Birulya Museum in Mogilev, while another project was presented at the Czech Embassy's gallery in Minsk.

## Yuzary gains 'ticket' to Jūrmala

By Irina Nenasheva

New Wave-2011 Young Pop Singers Contest semi-finals end in Moscow

In all, 125 entrants from 14 countries took part in the semi-finals, including three finalists from the Belarusian selection round: Yuzary (Yuri Navrotsky), Yevgeny Litvinkovich and Shalom Band. The jury chose those going through to Latvian Jūrmala; Belarus is to be represented by Yuri Navrotsky in the *New Wave-2011* finals.

Yuri, 20, was born in Minsk to a family of musicians and now studies at St. Petersburg's State University of Culture and Arts. He has sung at



Yuzary to sing in Jūrmala

St. Petersburg's Music Hall and has gypsy roots (on his father's side).

Initially, his parents planned to name him Yuzary but changed their minds, preferring the more familiar name of Yuri. However, the young singer uses Yuzary as his stage name. He was among the backing vocalists accompanying Anastasia Vinnikova during her *Eurovision-2011* International Song Contest performance.

The *New Wave-2011* finals are to take place in Jūrmala in late July. Over six evenings, world acknowledged masters of pop culture will join young performers on the stage of Dzintari Concert Hall. This year, the prize fund of the contest is 100,000 Euros, with half of this sum awarded to the winner.