

# Author's diverse hand-crafted techniques make articles unique

Hand-made handicrafts gain increasing popularity among lovers of exclusive style

By Marina Shumilo

In the past, women sewed clothes for their family members. Following tradition, on marrying, a lady presented her fiancé not only with a dowry but with hand-woven linen, as proof of her housekeeping skills. In the past, rushniks — long pieces of table linen — were especially carefully embroidered (bearing the motifs also common for clothes). Each symbol had its own special meaning.

The tradition remains today, with bread and salt for guests presented on a rushnik. With the development of industrial manufacturing, handicrafts lost their key significance but many Belarusian families still have some hand-made articles from the past — although most now reside in museums. Our progressive life has enabled each shop to offer a rich diversity of products, to suit any taste. However, many people prefer original and unique articles which industrial lines can hardly produce.

Unsurprisingly, hand-made products are now quite common among ordinary Belarusians. “These articles are most popular among those who wish to distinguish themselves from others,” explains Minsk handicraft master, Olga Kotova. “These people value style most of all.” For several years, Olga has been making dolls and interior decorations; in the course of time, her hobby has become more serious. “I took on handicrafts at school, attending different lessons,” she explains. “I became even more interested during my University studies as a teacher-artist. I then began making artistic dolls and used the theme for my diploma project; moreover, I wrote a Master's degree paper on this topic. At present, I teach handicrafts at the



Olga Kotova's dolls appear truly lifelike

National Centre of Artistic Creativity for Children and Youth.”

Actually, handicraft masters focus not only on dolls and interior decorations. Notebooks and postcards are extremely popular now, most often following the technique of scrap booking (pasting newspaper cutting, drawings, shells and, even, flowers). Special collections of twists are made for watch lovers but decorations prevail. Among the masters specialising in making decorations is Olga Glushakova, from Gomel. She can easily transform Czech glass or felted cloth into wonderful flowers.

“I believe that only those items

made from the heart are popular, as they combine their author's individuality and energy. If such an aspect is important for the buyer, they'll prefer hand-made items to anything else.” As regards inspiration, some artists are guided by their mood. “Inspiration comes from my soul and disappears if I feel anxious,” explains Ms. Glushakova. “It's impossible to invent something by force or at the snap of your fingers. All my articles are made with love,” she smiles.

Ms. Kotova, in turn, is inspired by nature. “My inspiration can arrive from an accidental composition of shadows on the ground or from an

unusual tree leaf. These images give me ideas,” she says. Of course, such artists usually dream of having their own shop — small but bearing its own name. Sadly, few exist, although their rarity makes them even more popular. “Of course, the Internet helps promote hand-made products. I began my career by creating a blog and a social network group,” says Ms. Kotova.

Craftsmen and women can also show their talent at handicraft fairs, which are regularly held in Minsk. These gather masters and buyers, with many attending master classes — offered free of charge. The most

popular are scrap booking, polymer clay moulding and embroidery with ribbons. Of course, it's hardly possible to become a true professional after a single lesson but the fundamentals of a craft can be easily mastered. “I seem to combine my own creativity with fulfilling orders and lecturing quite successfully,” notes Ms. Kotova. “I run lessons at the National Centre of Artistic Creativity for Children and Youth, while offering master classes there.”

Each artist's style is unique, creating hand-made items which are understandably popular and loved by their owners.

## Past miraculously combines with our present times

By Ivan Onisimov

### **Aida Kingdom exhibition unveiled at Minsk State Museum of History of Theatrical and Musical Culture**

The exhibition is a joint project launched by the museum and the theatre, featuring photos of actors who have performed the show's leading roles over the years, in addition to set scenes from 1953 to 2011. The Head Editor of Belarus' National Academic Bolshoi Opera and Ballet Theatre, Olga Savitskaya, notes that Sergey Nikolaev's unique costumes (from the museum's archives) occupy a special place in the exhibition, which also showcases costumes from the Bolshoi Theatre.

*Aida* was first staged in Minsk in 1953, by famous singer and operatic director Larisa Alexandrovskaya. It was a success for over 50 years, featuring Sofia Druker, Nikolay Vorvulev, Maria Gulegina, Mikhail Druzhina, Svetlana Danilyuk, Lyudmila Shemchuk, Zinovy Babiy, Anatoly Generalov, Mikhail Galkovsky, Victor Chernobaev and Nagima Galeeva. Audiences were attracted by its magnificent scale and wonderful sets (created by artist Sergey Nikolaev).

In 1953, another prominent staging of the opera took place — in Bucharest. Sets and costumes were designed by People's Artist of Belarus, Honoured Figure of Arts of Russia, Lithuania and Tajikistan Yevgeny Chemodurov.



Exhibition devoted to *Aida* opera

A new staging was premiered in May 2011, overseen by director Mikhail Pandzhavidze, who chose Mr. Chemodurov's sets for his performance. “We've done a huge job searching for original materials and restorations — visiting Kazan and addressing the Chemodurov Fund. Information

was collected from his few drafts, booklets and set designs,” Mr. Pandzhavidze notes.

Sets for the new performance were prepared by Mr. Chemodurov's pupil, Alexander Kostuchenko, allowing today's *Aida* to miraculously combine the past and the present.

## Board of twelve maestros

### **Twelve film maestros to form new board of Belarusfilm National Film Studio**

“The board will be working pro bono, jointly with the Belarusfilm General Director, focusing on the most promising film projects, while analysing the work of young producers,” notes the National Film Studio's General Director, Oleg Silvanovich. He explains that he already has twelve candidates for the new panel — all outstanding figures of national cinematography. Mr. Silvanovich is ready to delegate responsibility to them as board members, with talks underway.

Speaking of Belarusfilm's future plans, Mr. Silvanovich tells us that there is a feeling that more Belarusian films should be available on DVD in the shops. “This is a top priority for us today. Some difficulties are observed but, in the coming months, we'll release two discs of Belarusian cartoons for children,” he adds.