

Promenade through Paris in company of painter Irina Kotova

National Art Museum hosts exhibition of personal impressions of Belarusian artist who's been living in French capital for a long time

By Victor Mikhailov

It's said that everyone should visit Paris at least once in their lifetime. Really, it's true; the city is wonderful, bursting with artistic freedom. Paris is home to artists from all over the world, including those from Belarus. Famous Boris Zaborov works there, though he still sees himself as a Belarusian painter. Irina Kotova is another Belarusian in the French capital, living there for almost a decade. After graduating from the Belarusian Academy of Arts, she moved to Paris to continue her education. Who knows whether it was fate or an accident... but the city inspired her to draw and exhibit her pictures.

The National Art Museum of Belarus is hosting Irina's *Imaginary Paris*, which she sees as a great honour. It's no mean feat to exhibit at the country's main museum and is a huge responsibility for those who place their works alongside pieces by famous painters from their motherland.

Irina has lived in France for quite a while but, like Boris Zaborov, still considers herself to be a Belarusian painter. France is her second homeland but Ms. Kotova is convinced that she upholds Belarusian artistic traditions. However, as she currently lives in Paris, it necessarily inspires her work. It might seem paradoxical, but Irina knows

the French capital even better than her native Minsk. It isn't because Paris is a cultural capital of the globe, filled with a rich cultural heritage of monuments, museums, architecture and galleries. Rather, Irina endeavours to

closely with someone, seeing them from different angles, without gaining a particular intimacy.

Not long ago, Irina saw Paris from above — from a bird's eye view. Interestingly, on staying in Minsk

Irina's time in Paris has surely brought her heart closer to its aura, with the city penetrating her soul.

Many people have helped Irina to implement her *Imaginary Paris* project. However, the French Ambassador



Images inspired by multi-faceted Paris

she received permission from the authorities to draw the Parisian capital from local roofs.

Love for the arts seems to overcome all obstacles. In fact, Irina is afraid of heights but, while on the roof, she

tels, which is similar to using paint but with the advantage of allowing quick sketches. This helps her to capture moments which might otherwise quickly disappear. Sometimes, she begins drawing but, thirty minutes later, must change the composition of the sky. The weather, for example, can change so suddenly. However, she has enough time to catch a unique moment in the general landscape. Her desire to bring each moment to the fore is perhaps at the core of Irina's artistry. It makes her stand out from others — as noted at the National Art Museum. On viewing her drawings, you realise that they reflect a Belarusian artist's view of France. "Mist and twilight are more characteristic of the Slavonic, Belarusian soul but Irina is more like the Impressionists, who tended to depict a certain moment or state," notes Irina Skvortsova, a candidate of art history.

Irina's works are kept all over the world, in private collections and galleries. When she parts with her pictures, she always hopes that they'll end up in 'kind hands'. In this respect, she's a true artist, desiring that her works bring joy to others, while being unique to herself and depicting something native and dear.

Irina Kotova's pictures allow us to travel to remote Paris in our mind's eye, viewing the city from above or perhaps walking along its wonderful streets...



Exhibition at National Art Museum unveils Irina Kotova's original creativity to the public

understand it as an ordinary city — by turns happy and sad, routine and festive, lyrical and faceless. Paris shapes her mood. She even dreams of the city. It seems that she knows Paris as she does a friend; it's impossible to live

for her show's opening, she suddenly realised that she greatly missed the Parisian rooftops. A feeling of kinship with a city takes a long time to come, only truly happening when your soul joins with that of your dwelling place.

to Minsk, H.E. Mr. Michel Raineri, has rendered special assistance. He is much interested in her work, being an artistic man himself, writing books and plays. He invited Irina to show Paris from various angles and, with his help,

felt no fear. Comfortable conditions were created for her work, with a 'workshop' created on one of the roofs, comprising two chairs — one for drawing and the other for resting.

Irina Kotova draws in pas-

Exhibition arouses true delight among art lovers

By Yekaterina Sidelova

Pictures by Belarusian painter Ivan Khrutsky return to National Art Museum permanent exposition

A collection of 23 canvases by Ivan Khrutsky has returned to Minsk from the State Tretyakov Gallery. They were on show there for one and a half months, alongside another 12 artworks from the Russian museum's collection by the Belarusian master, to celebrate the 200th anniversary of his birth.

According to Vladimir Prokoptsov, Director of the National Art Museum of Belarus, the show aroused true delight

Last year was marked with enhanced interest in the artist's legacy, with Polotsk hosting an international scientific-practical conference entitled *Ivan Khrutsky: Dialogue of Cultures*.

The collection has inspired interest abroad, with paintings going on show at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris. In addition, Vilnius hosted an exhibition, organised jointly with Lithuanian museums, with six canvases from their own collections added. Applications for similar events were also received from the Hungarian and Austrian embassies. The jubilee of the outstanding master has been registered on UNESCO's List of 2010-2011 Anniversa-

ries. "Due to these events, the name of our prominent fellow countryman has become widely known within the cultural space of Europe. More people have learnt about his artworks and, correspondingly, about Belarus," notes Mr. Prokoptsov. In 2010, an album-catalogue and a booklet — *Ivan Khrutsky's Works in Collection of Belarus' National Art Museum* — were released, alongside postcards depicting a reproduction of the *Portrait of an Unknown Woman with Fruit Basket*, a first day cover envelope bearing a commemorative postal stamp and silver coins. The *Ivan Khrutsky* album is the 31st volume of the *Great Painters* book collection.

Creativity in singing culture

Grodno hosts *Kolozhsky Blagovest* festival of Orthodox chants



Orthodox chants performed in Grodno

By Yelena Stasyukevich

The festival brought together around 50 groups

from Belarus, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Russia, Ukraine, Romania and Serbia, with the public wel-

come to attend not only the first and last concerts but each one in between. Choirs sang sacred and secular works at Grodno's House of Culture, with groups travelling from Konakovo (Russia) and Olshzyn (Poland). A student choir from the Minsk State Linguistic University also took part.

The festival of Orthodox chants first took place in Grodno in 2002 and was dedicated to the 10th anniversary of the revival of the Grodno Eparchy. *Kolozhsky Blagovest* aims to encourage spiritual union and mutual understanding while popularising creativity in Orthodox singing culture.