

Paintings *Champions League* and *Good News* figuratively depict the forthcoming international hockey tournament and the location where it will be held

Famous artist and State Award laureate, Victor Alshevsky, has been inspired by the bright sporting event — the forthcoming Ice Hockey World Championship in Minsk — and created two impressive (2x3m each) picturesque works dedicated to sport and the power of human spirit

By Victor Mikhailov

Of course, one needs to see these works, and the impressions are very strong, however, I couldn't do without explanations from the artist himself. Victor Alshevsky isn't merely a painter; he is a painter-philosopher, and this easily explains his creative thinking. Therefore, his works demanded the artist's comments and these were easily forthcoming.

One of the pictures, entitled *Champions League*, depicts three silhouettes of players, though in knight's garb. The artist explained, "The word 'league' determines people who have achieved some heights," believes Mr. Alshevsky. "In this situation we figuratively take three images, three symbols. The pedestal is what embodies the peak of achievement in sports: silver, gold and bronze. These embody three categories of people who achieve perfection. The canvas' major spot determines its background. Red always unites, and this is the colour of power and a powerful accent which shapes the emotional contrast of the whole work."

The picture also portrays a hockey stick and a puck — the attributes of the popular game. Meanwhile, according to Mr. Alshevsky, the symbol of the circle is the symbol of the earth. These contrast the men's muscular backs and the iron of their knightly armour.

What inspired you to create these works?

For me, like for many people from my generation, I discovered hockey in the 1960s, when the first world championships of great emotional intensity took place, and when Firsov and Kharlamov were playing... We studied at art school during the day and watched the hockey battles at night. At that

time, the Soviet squad took the lead. By outstripping the Canadians, Americans, and Swedes, it became a memorable event at world level. It demonstrated the strength and power of human character, showing how people can achieve great results by willpower.

sive, and I had a desire to reflect the emotional state, which turned out to be rather difficult. In my opinion, it's banal and not so interesting to make it realistic. I had an opportunity to show some significance and symbolism of these strong and courageous

Mr. Alshevsky called his second picture — *Good News* — where the artist's message is a particular historical event.

"Just look," Mr. Alshevsky says, paying attention to the detail, "the left hand of the horseman in the cart



Picturesque canvas *Good News*, 2010-2014



Picturesque canvas *Champions League*, 2010-2014

When I was a child, I also tried to play hockey. Figuratively speaking, these are the same as the medieval jousts on horses and with lances. This is associativeness, as we remember how the helmets were flying, the hockey sticks were broken and how fans were roaring at the stables as if in the Coliseum. All these peculiarities are very impres-

people through symbols and images. Moreover, hockey also embraces figure skating and artistic gymnastics. This game is very exact and clear and their performance is so polished in itself that we often don't notice the nuances of the players' hard labour. In hockey we mostly see how the puck is delivered and feel how powerful it is.

is pointing, like a messenger, to the definite event: 2014, Minsk, Belarus. Meanwhile, his right hand holds a musical instrument — a sign of glory. I took the ancient Roman and Greek cart as a basis for this work. The bronze men's figure is in the cart and the bronze horses start their run. All these are on the foundation of



Victor Alshevsky in his studio

Minsk's Glavpochtamp (Main Post Office). The country's major post office is the place from which all the information about this great event will be delivered. The 'beams' of information — the letters — are scattered across various countries. The news is flying that the great event — the Ice Hockey World Championship — will be taking place. We see a hockey field where Glavpochtamp is standing and the light background of the picture implies the sunrise: the beginning and the countdown to the event."

In other words, your idea relied on the fact that Minsk has become a venue for organising the Ice Hockey World Championship. This event was taken to be depicted figuratively through artistic means.

Yes, I had an opportunity to reflect the scale, power and significance of this event, that's why the lumbering cart is apparent in the picture, as is the beautiful building of the Glavpochtamp — a sign of our capital and one of its symbols. We also take other symbols of the event, e.g. there's a hockey museum in Canada and the Coliseum is, of course, a symbol of Italy. As you see, all these designations determine the image of each country — a participating state of the world hockey forum. Russia is portrayed through the Kremlin Chimes, while old fortresses embody Finland, Denmark, and Latvia. Each state is presented through plastic images and signs.

How much time did you need to create these pieces?

I had the original idea almost three years ago, with some ideas laid down in the subconscious mind. I wanted to reflect the image of the time. Yes, it took me almost three years to create these pictures. Of course, during this period other pieces were also created, but each work requires study and the collecting of materials. This was an attempt to reflect a large-scale event, hosted by our country, through signs, images and symbols.

Is this your philosophy?

We're creating the legend — the legend of the time. This is a reminder that such an event took place, and these pictures are dedicated to it. The appearance of these canvases was preceded by long and considered work over their creation. These are my milestone pictures.

Do you wonder how the guests of the championship will assess your works?

When hockey is photographed, it looks different to how these works should feel when exhibited (at least I would like them to be exhibited) in those arenas which will be hosting hockey events. I hope that they arouse direct associativeness. To just exhibit them in a museum or an exhibition hall is quite a different story.