



# Images shine into the eyes and force you to find the habitual in unusual

The Minsk Museum of Modern Fine Arts hosts the exhibition which visually illustrates backgrounds of Belarusian avant-garde

By Victor Mikhailov

Now one cannot surprise anybody with avant-garde in fine art. Moreover, many young artists even abuse their not very distinct adherence to this direction. Another matter is when you assess avant-garde experiments in painting or in graphical art that is almost 50 years old. However, somewhere during the 1980s-1990s, Belarusian avant-garde became an open alternative to official art when it ceased to be conducted underground.

Basically, artists of informal direction aspired to re-establish the discontinued connection with classical avant-garde of the early 20th century. In this environment arose original forms of artistic activity: action art, performance, video-art, declaration, manifestos, installations and many other things. In the 1980s, informal exhibitions were being held in many different places: in foyers of cinemas, libraries and in assembly halls of various public institutions. Such exhibitions as *1+1+14-1+1+1=6*, *Art Studio*, *Fragment-Event'87*, *On Collector's Prospect* and *Panorama* in the 1980s were a real manifesto of free art.

Inside of the artistic process of informal art it was notable that the groups of creatively close artists united by a uniform vision. At this time, there was organised the Association of creative intelligentsia, association Form, Galsha, Plyuraliz, BLO, Vitebsk Square, 4-63 from Polotsk and many other. Each group of artists offered their own manifesto, an alternative to generally acknowledged professional art. Here is the example of text to the exhibition of association Form: 'What undoubtedly unites all artists is the conviction that art development is largely a development of form, hence the name of the association, which was also a reaction to that long-term struggle of dogmatic art with the so-called 'formalism'.

And here is the extract from the booklet of the 1989 exhibition *Panorama*, where artists of 9 informal

associations were exhibited: '... Belarusian fund of culture guided by the purpose to show the cut of modern Belarusian art of nonconventional directions: expressionism, surrealism, conceptualism, pop art, installations, etc. Modern art came to modernism in search of new figurative means... There are no bad or good directions in art, there are only bad or good artists. Avant-garde is needed as well as any other direction in art, to any society which considers itself to be developed culturally and economically.'

The creative association Square was organised in 1987 in Vitebsk. Its task included the establishment of aesthetic principles of classical avant-garde and postmodernism in

the artistic life of the republic. The association became an environment for individual creative processes focused on certain aesthetic values. The work of the association was organised in the form of actions and exhibitions. The first such action was the exhibition *Experiment* in 1988, devoted to Kazimir Malevich's 110th anniversary, where, as well as the works of artists, information about

Malevich was also shown and introduced.

Soon after, in the structure of the Belarusian Union of Artists, there started to appear the sections not on forms of art

understood individuality in art not as selfish, free self-expression. According to them, individuality, as well as in all spheres of life, is a way of definition, way of creation and development of public need.

Here is how the already known Belarusian artist, Nikolay Bushchik explains his participation in Nemiga-17 today, one of his early works is also represented at the exhibition in the Museum of Modern Fine Art: "At that time, in the 80s, art passed towards excitement. It started to offer themes of worries, themes of emotional perception of objects. In that way as you feel them or want to turn them into any

light-stresses for such conditions on canvas which force to worry. Certainly, much happens at the subconscious level, associativity, as from the most visible an artist chooses the most active and characteristic, that expresses feeling or emotion. And spectators understand and reach for such fine arts.

They say: 'This is really similar.' Together with the artist, their creative imagination also starts to play. It gives them more pleasure than simply looking at any accurate object or real landscape. Hence it is absolutely another direction in fine arts, where art starts to get style. Each artist develops his or her own style which helps to create space in the way he or she sees and understands it. This is the difference between artists.'

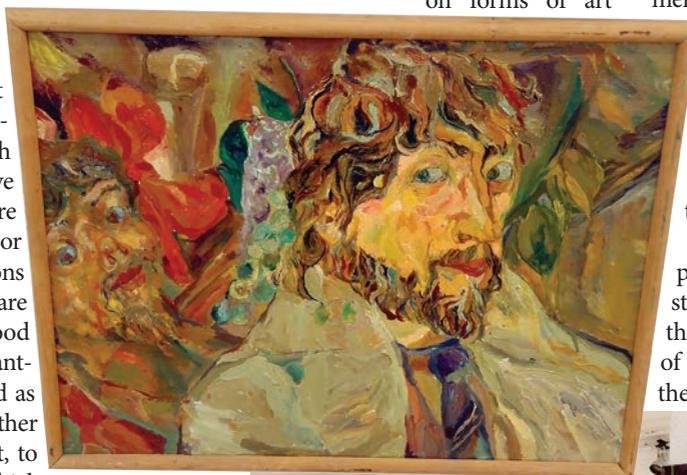
**The one who sees your pictures, for certain, will not confuse them with the works of someone else. How would you describe your style?**

"Certainly, I can describe myself, although art critics or a fan of art will give at once more capacious description. In my work I aspire to that, which as a result creates a sensation of pleasure and harmonised rest, the mood bringing a person into good, vital harmony."

Nikolay Bushchikhas has not changed in creativity over the course of time. Here is how he formulates modern creative credo:

"It seems to me, that nowaday artists have divided into two creative directions. Some of them work for the dark and others for light. I work for light. I am interested in my motherland, in its fine Divine creation. All the bad — the bad moods, bad actions — we make for ourselves. All our displeasure results only from the discrepancy of our desires to what happens, and that's all."

They are different aksakals of Belarusian avant-garde. They differently express thoughts and sensations in their works. They are individuals, and this creates an interest in them. The present exhibition in the Museum of Modern Fine Arts clearly confirms this.



(painting, graphics, sculpture), as it was earlier, but on interests or ideological principles. There appeared Nemiga-17 — an association of adherents of pictorial and formal

beginning in art. From the 1988 of exhibition catalogue — Nemiga-17: 'Artists deny the understanding of art as illustrations of political slogans. Art cannot and should not fall into the role of commentator of the already ideologically comprehended. It should bring a person to comprehension of new public needs, to form tomorrow's new style of life.'

At last, participants of Nemiga-17

feeling. To make something dark blue into red, and to select other unusual colours nearby. And together, it will create either a drama situation, or a situation of lyricism, or a situation of enthusiastic feeling. And this leads to a change of tasks and approaches in art, since the 10s and 20s of the 20th century: let's take the creativity of Petrov-Vodkin, suprematists with Malevich, artists of the 30s, Konchalovsky... I take close art, without mentioning Europe. And there were Matisse and van Gogh who worked adequately with their impressions and images. Certainly, art became more malleable; artists began to search for style which would create mood. And now an artist searches by using rhythms,

