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EDITOR'S LETTER NEW YEAR'S EULOGY

I always listen to the song The Year Is Passing Away by Vadim Egorov, a wonderful author and performer (I don't like the word "bard" in relation to the author's song; for me it has a purely religious meaning: these were Celtic sages, sacred singers who paid tribute to the deeds of gods and kings), during the New Year celebrations. Sometimes alone, sometimes with friends: empathy, isn't it wonderful? It seems that these verses, set to music and performed to the rhythm of my favourite Portuguese fado, set the right mood for the event. With a slight sadness and at the same time a hidden hope for the best:

*We are to drink from underground waters,
But as long as fate promises us good luck,
Let's start the New Year and
Sing of the past year in verse
and mourn it in our hearts...*

We all remember how enthusiastically we looked forward to New Year's holidays in childhood, which we associated with presents, and in school years – with the winter holidays. Skiing, sledding, joyful New Year parties with Father Frost and the Snow Maiden. And this popular call of mass entertainers to children: "Children, let's shout all together: One, two, three, light the New Year tree!" I still keep New Year's cards of my childhood, despite numerous moves round Europe...

In my student years I worked as a Father Frost – my height and diction were quite suitable. I had never agreed on the roles of snowmen, snowflakes or bunnies, despite the persuasion of the organisers of "collective New Year parties"...

However, the festivity of the New Year celebrations was somewhat overshadowed by winter

end-of-term exams. St Tatiana's Day (25th January) was always compensation for that "long ordeal" – a long-standing university holiday and the first day of the holidays.

In my mature years as a journalist, I would prepare for the New Year with enthusiasm. I admit that it was sometimes not so easy. In the newspaper where I worked immediately after university as the junior employee I was charged, dressed in a long loose-fitting garment that vaguely resembled Father Frost's scarlet coat, of going round my colleagues' homes, congratulating their children, and delivering presents purchased for them by the trade union. Especially for this I prepared a life-affirming speech. However, neither it, nor even the grey cotton wool beard that I had put on saved me from failures. In the spirit of traditional Russian hospitality every parent wholeheartedly wanted to share with old Father Frost both his New Year's joy and everything that adorned the festive table, including strong drinks. After visiting the third flat not only did I totally forget the congratulatory text, but also lost my "beard".

However, I did not lose heart: after all, the New Year is our most optimistic and intoxicating holiday. No wonder Vadim Egorov wrote:

*Having detached ourselves for an instant
from earthly burdens,
Let's smash the crystal of stillness into
smithereens.
On New Year's Day our destiny is
To glow on Earth like baubles on
a Christmas tree.*

Happy New Year, dear readers!
Peace be with you!

Kirill Privalov

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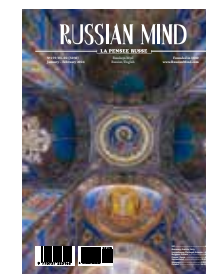
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The frescoes of the Nativity of Christ Cathedral
in Alexandrov (Russia). 1696



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MAIN TOPIC

HISTORY AS COGNITION

*History is not at all a search for the ultimate truth,
but an expression of the desire to find answers to the pressing questions of our time*

By KIRILL PRIVALOV

“There is no history without secret code,” the ancients said. They were only half right: equally, there is no history without discoveries. Without learning new things. And here many questions arise. What is a secret in history? How are discoveries achieved? And in general, are they the key to cognition?.. Cognition of that very innermost secret. Secret of history.

This issue of *Russian Mind*, according to our tradition, is rich in historical materials. And the main topic among them is, of course, the history of Arkaim, a complex consisting of a fortified settlement, a burial ground and colonies dated 20th–16th centuries BC (!), which was discovered in the early 1970s in the Southern Urals, in the valleys of the Bolshaya Karaganka and Utyaganka rivers in the Chelyabinsk Oblast of Russia. Following Arkaim, archaeologists found other settlements in the same Ural area. All of them are united by a similar organisation of urban infrastructure, which is well-developed and diverse, and it is no coincidence that scientists called this mysterious civilisation – as it turns out now to be one of the most ancient in the world – the Country of Towns.

“Russia is again the Homeland of Elephants,” an incorrigible skeptic will express his distrust of the above facts. This is his right, not to be taken away. But in fact, Arkaim, the northernmost of the ancient civilisations, is, without a doubt, a huge sensation. However, should we be surprised? The world, with its gigantic glaciations and sharp

warmings over distant millennia, is so rich in discoveries that we have to talk not about its rational perception, but about cognition, combining logical comprehension with intuition and even sometimes insight.

It is possible, of course, to number carefully all civilisations and proceed from this neat classification in a logical assessment of earthly life, like the guru of philosophy of history, the Englishman Arnold Toynbee who, in particular, saw in the Russian Cossacks some semblance of a medieval knightly order. But is such mental juggling of peoples and nations capable of bringing us closer to understanding the phenomenon of civilisations, closed societies characterised by a set of determining features, which allow us to characterise civilisations? Is it possible today to adapt the history of countries and states to ready-made concepts, to the conventional system of distribution of roles of peoples in the global civilisational theatre that has developed in the perception of some political authorities? No people can be fit in a matrix pre-straightened for them from the outside. It is possible, of course, to remake historical facts, change them beyond recognition, but the essence of the world historical mainstream still cannot be shaken.

Especially now, when archaeologists have truly space technologies at their service. What you sometimes cannot see under your feet, in the dirt and dust, is clearly visible from near-earth orbit.

It was not for nothing that the poet asserted: “Big things can be seen from a distance...” Today in different parts of the planet such new cultural and civilisational layers are being discovered over and over again, that historians are quite at a loss.

Not to mention: can history even be considered a 100% objective science? After all, a wide range of opinions and conclusions is expected. It’s no secret: every historian’s text is in one way or another connected with its author, if not with the original chronicler, whose works were, to one degree or another, used as a source for understanding the historical process. Any historical events are seen through the eyes of a historian, who does not simply list them, but dissects them, looking for the causes and connections of these phenomena. How can you not get lost in such a host of facts and comments? After all, as some theorists believe, achieving the objective truth is a process, not a result.

So what? Even the ancients argued that no one is immune to making mistakes. The value of history as a science, that helps us develop our collective memory and national identity, preserve the heritage and traditions of our ancestors, does not diminish in any way. On the contrary, it strengthens that special everyday collective mentality called “patriotism” and confirms the spirit of the state, its ontological foundations.

It is not for nothing that the Russian philosopher and writer Vasily Rozanov wrote: “Loving a happy and cheerful homeland is

not a big thing. We must love her precisely when she is weak, small, humiliated, finally, stupid, finally, even vicious.” Nikolai Gogol was even more specific: “If a Russian only loves Russia, he will love everything that is in Russia. God Himself is now leading us to this love. Without the illnesses and suffering that had accumulated in such abundance inside her and which were our own fault, none of us would have felt compassion for her. And compassion is already the beginning of love.” That same love that should not be hidden by the bustle of everyday life, the race for momentary benefits, finally, consumer thinking. To be more specific: love for one’s native country, for one’s fatherland. Including her history, whichever it may be. How can one not recall the lines from Alexander Pushkin’s letter to Pyotr Chaadaev: “...I swear on my honour that for nothing in the world I would want to change my fatherland or have a different history than the history of our ancestors, the way God gave it to us.”

However, time, as we know, flies faster than us. It is rushing, flying, changing! And, perhaps, in the two centuries that have passed since Pushkin’s time, so many things have changed on Earth that the postulates of the ideals of the past no longer work, do they? I’ll be honest: I sincerely doubt it. Moreover, how can one not master the horizons of cognition when there is such a powerful flow of information these days? How to set a time frame for facts, since history exists only where time exists? And what is time like, if you don’t give it time, as the charismatic President of France François Mitterrand once called for?..

Sophistry, play on words? It seems to me – no. There is simply a desire to give the facts the opportunity to “rest” and put human history into some kind of framework in our



Clio, the Muse of History. By Pierre Mignard. 1689

usual worldview. After all, according to Christian ideas, history opens not from the moment of the creation of man, but from the moment of his fall into sin, disobedience to the Divine will. Only after the expulsion of people from the paradise, where the existence of Adam and Eve flowed smoothly and peacefully without essential metamorphoses, did history begin. A real, authentic, merciless history, embedded within specific time boundaries. Cognition also arose shyly. Even at the cost of original sin, but still cognition was so sweet, so tempting and, it would seem, so promising.

“A beautiful legend, a textbook myth,” someone would say about the above. However, true stories are usually quickly forgotten, and myths live for centuries, if not millennia – this is an axiom.

“We consider myth as a type of human behaviour and at the same time as an element of civilisation,” wrote the Romanian thinker Mircea Eliade in the middle of the last century. And further: “...If myth is not just an infantile or misguided creation of “primitive” humanity, but an image of a form of being in the world, then what can be said about the myths of our time?” Moreover,



Adam and Eve expelled from Paradise. By Gustave Dore. 1865

history, the interest in which remains great throughout the world today, gives us a huge number of topics for all sorts of new myths. It is not facts that are valued in journalism today, but their comments, conjectures, and therefore myths. And even without them, most likely, there can be no talk of a sincere desire to cognise history along with its “legends of our time.” In the end, history is not at all a search for the ultimate truth, but an expression of the desire to find answers to the pressing questions of our time, even if, for reasons that depend on us or not – no difference, such questions have not yet been fully formulated by us.

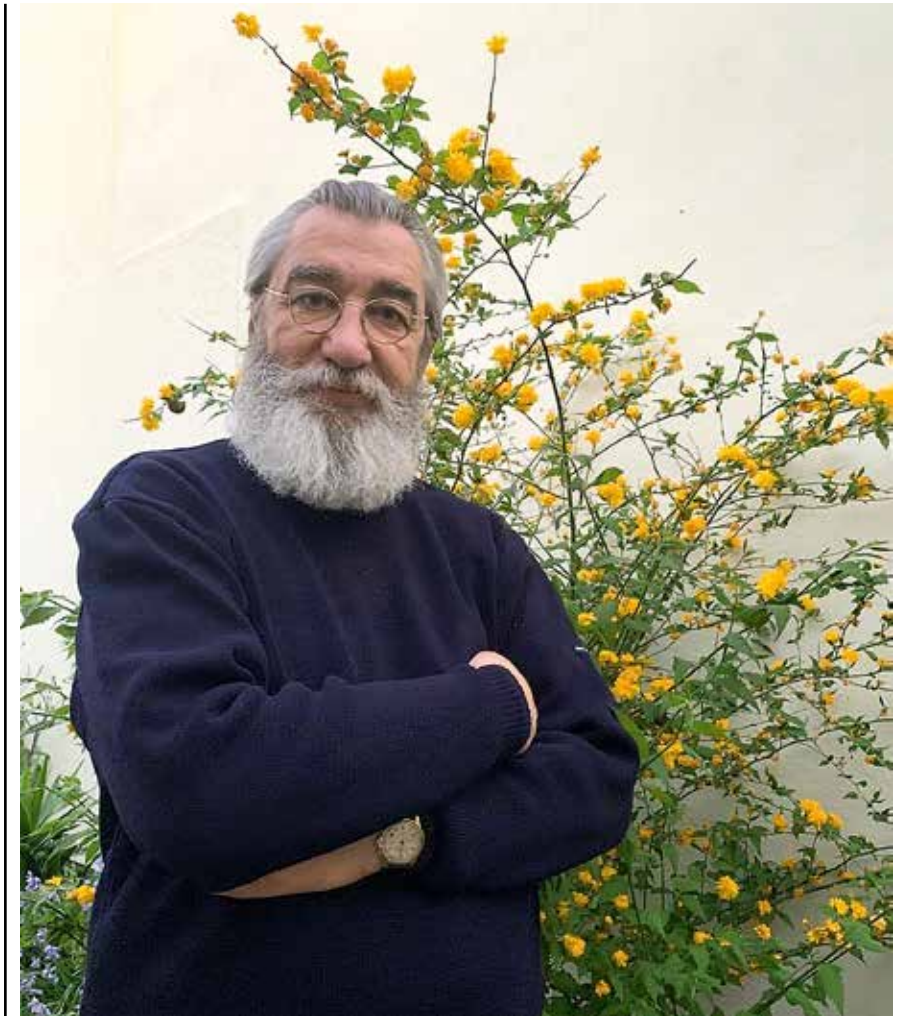
I once heard from one of my American colleagues a maxim that I liked as a professional journalist (and therefore, first of all, as an entertaining storyteller): “Who believes that the world consists of atoms is mistaken; it’s actually made of (hi)stories.” That’s right. The continuity of the flow of history that scientists talk about is in fact the inexhaustibility of a collection of histories. In plural! And in each of them, if it is entertaining and rich in symbols, there is a certain secret, there is a plot, there is intrigue. Having discovered one story for ourselves (or imagining that it has finally been discovered), we face another one, even more fascinating, exciting, and sometimes even more mysterious, containing its own secret. Isn’t it wonderful to constantly feel like you’re on the eve of discovery? We at *Russian Mind* strive to present a discovery to readers in each of our materials. How else? After all, history for us is an act of cognition. Sometimes even somewhat painful, but nevertheless most often pleasant.

However, there is another, completely opposite, point of view. Thus, the famous German philosopher Karl Jaspers believed that “history has a deep meaning,

which is inaccessible to human cognition.” Jaspers said: “Between the immeasurable prehistory and the immeasurable future lie 5,000 years of history known to us, an insignificant segment of the boundless existence of man. This story is open to the past and the future... We and our time lie in this history... In terms of the breadth and depth of changes in all human life, our era is of decisive importance. Only the history of mankind as a whole can provide a scale for understanding what is happening at the present time.”

Well, sometimes we also will try to proceed from this postulate. We have significant grounds for the correct approach to understanding history in all its guises. Plunging into the past, we emerge into the future and do not at all want our past to repeat itself in the near or even long term. In this context, the brilliant Russian maxim involuntarily comes to mind, filled with our specific national self-irony: “Everything is ahead of us – and this is what is alarming.” Therefore, having analysed “the affairs of bygone days,” we strive to be as objective and self-possessed as possible when assessing today’s events. And even though the pioneer of the information technology era, American Steve Jobs, convinced his contemporaries that the past did not exist, and the future, most likely, will never come... We, sinners, can only be content with the present, and that suits us for now.

We, Russian people, no matter where we are in the world, live according to a different algorithm: we carefully study the past, optimistically count on the future and try to live and work with dignity in the present. It seems that we have some solid grounds for such a healthy assessment of our *modus vivendi*. After all, by cognising history, we also cognising ourselves. Is that not right?



IN MEMORY OF VICTOR LOUPAN

These days, we fondly remember Victor Nikolayevich Loupan, whose life was cut short on 22 January 2022.

A brilliant journalist, an outstanding figure of the Russian diaspora, who made an invaluable contribution to preserving the cultural heritage of Russian émigré, a talented writer and documentary film director, a multifaceted and profound individual, Victor Loupan was at the helm of the *Russian Mind* for sixteen years.

His vivid editorials, full of wise thoughts, subtle reflections, and skilful analysis of current events, were a shining example of high journalism and the hallmark of our publication.

A devoted son of the Russian Orthodox Church, Victor Nikolayevich was a man of rare moral virtues. Communicating with him always brought great joy; he radiated positivity, friendliness, and the special calmness of a wise philosopher. The depth of his knowledge and the richness of his spiritual world seemed boundless.

Losing such extraordinary people is hard, but meeting such remarkable souls on our life journey is a great blessing.

Memory eternal!

The *Russian Mind* magazine
Editorial Board

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM PATRIARCH KIRILL OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUS' TO THE ARCHPASTORS, PASTORS, DEACONS, MONASTICS AND ALL FAITHFUL CHILDREN OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

Beloved in the Lord archpastors, all-honourable presbyters and deacons, God-loving monks and nuns, dear brothers and sisters.

The unutterable love of God has gathered us today so that in *the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace* (Eph 4:3) we may celebrate one of the most solemn and at the same time mysterious feasts of the Church – the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ. Glorifying our Saviour's coming into the world, I extend my heartfelt congratulations to all of you, my beloved, on the joyful event which opened a new era in the relationship between God and humanity.

Looking back at that moment two thousand years ago, we every time strive to fathom the great miracle of the Divine Incarnation, and our Creator's loving-kindness and mercy never fails to amaze us. For many centuries, humanity had been living in tense expectation, awaiting *the Peacemaker* (cf. Gen 49:10) promised by the Lord, which is to say a *King... just and having salvation* (Zech 9:9), in Whose name *nations will hope* (Is 42:4). Thus, in the fullness of time *unto us a Child was born* (Is 9:6) *that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life* (Jn 3:16). The love of God which *passes knowledge*

(Eph 3:19) sent into the world *not an ambassador or an angel*, or the strong and mighty ruler that people had been expecting, but God Himself Who took flesh in order to deliver humankind from the bondage of sin and evil.

It is astounding that the greatest milestone event in human history, heralded by the Old Testament prophets and foreknown by prominent thinkers of antiquity, came to pass so quietly, seemingly unnoticeable. Bethlehem lay sleeping. Jerusalem lay sleeping. The whole of Judaea lay sleeping. Neither to the powerful *sound of the trumpet* (Ps 150:3), nor to worldwide jubilation, but humbly and meekly did the Almighty Lord – the King of kings and the Lord and Creator of all things – reveal Himself to the world in the nightly silence of a poor cave, glorified by the angelic hosts and a small number of shepherds who came to *see this thing that has come to pass* (Lk 2:15).

It is as if at the very start of His earthly journey the Lord desires total humiliation [to become] the measure of His Goodness, St John Chrysostom writes. Only love which is perfect can act with such nobleness, for it *does not seek its own* (1 Cor 13:4-5), nor does it parade

itself or demand honour and glory. Perfect love endures all things, every hardship and affliction for the sake of others. *For this He assumed my body, John Chrysostom continues, that I may become capable of His Word; taking my flesh, He gives me His spirit; and so He bestowing and I receiving, He prepares for me the treasure of Life* (The Nativity Sermon). God's abundant love for us was revealed in that we received the true treasure of Life – the Lord Himself, *for of Him and through Him and to Him are all things* (Rom 11:36).

Love is the real reason and driving force behind God's actions. He brought the world into being and created the human person, giving him gifts in plenty. And out of love He came to save the human person when he had fallen away from communion with his Maker. Our Creator ordained that the purpose of our life is to *love one another* (Jn 13:34). But how can we achieve this when the world around us is so full of evil and hatred? To do so, we need to open our heart and offer it to God. He alone can transform it and make our heart, weak and constrained as it is, capable of embracing all those who are near or far off, all those who do us good or wrong. We are called to love them all, as Christ's commandment teaches

us, and be perfect, just as our *Father in heaven is perfect* (Mt 5:48).

As we kneel in prayer before the Newborn Divine Infant, let us ponder on what gifts we can offer to the Lord and Creator of all things. Is there anything worthy of and commensurate with the greatness of the Pre-Eternal Maker? Yes, there is such a precious gift which is most desirable in God's eyes – it is our humble, loving and merciful heart. So let us magnify the Incarnate Christ not only with beautiful hymns and words of congratulation but above all with our good works. Let us share the radiant Christmas joy with those in need, comfort our neighbours by our loving care, visit the sick and afflicted. Let us console and support people who have lost heart and shield with our prayer *all those in turmoil and grief*.

By its great salvific power love heals all indifference and malice, heals enmity and grievance. It assuages the hard-hearted and makes straight the many things that have gone awry in social relations. By doing so we will indeed fulfil our lofty vocation as Christians, for *in effusion of love we resemble God* (Isaac of Nineveh, Mystic Treatises, Chapter 74).

The mystery of the Divine Incarnation is the mystery of God's real presence in the world. The Apostle and Evangelist John the Theologian bears the following witness to the life of the world to come when the Lord abides forever with humankind: *He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God* (Rev 21:3). However, the ineffable mystery of the Divine presence is revealed here, on earth, for with the Nativity of the Saviour *the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand* (Mk 1:15). We become a visible part of this reality, making up the One Holy Church of Christ, through which we all, my beloved, serve as messengers and envoys of



Patriarch Kirill delivers the Christmas service in the Christ the Saviour Cathedral in Moscow

Photo: Oleg Varov

this Higher Kingdom of love. In some mysterious and profound way, we experience that *God is with us*, and this experience constitutes the very essence of the hidden mystical life of the Church.

Let us always remember that inasmuch as the Almighty God Himself – *the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last* (Rev 22:13) – embraced the history of humanity and promised to be with us *even unto the end of the world* (Mt 28:20), we have nothing to fear even though we

live in anxious times. In responding to the great love of our Saviour, let us learn to entrust our whole self to the Lord and His good Providence, so that unto the second glorious coming of Christ we may bear bold and joyful witness even to those *from far countries* (Is 8:9) that *God is with us!*

+KIRILL
PATRIARCH OF MOSCOW
AND ALL RUS'
Christmas
2023/2024
Moscow

FOR THE 15th ENTHRONEMENT ANNIVERSARY OF THE PRIMATE OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH, HIS HOLINESS PATRIARCH KIRILL OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUS'

Your Holiness, you have been on the throne of the Primate of Moscow for fifteen years now. These years are closely connected with your archpastoral labours – and not only within your fatherland. For it was a time of landmark, very difficult and truly crucial decisions for the canonical space of the Russian Orthodox Church and the entire Russian world. The results of your Patriarchal service to God and people are the doubling of the number of dioceses of the Russian Orthodox Church and the number of its bishops, the building and restoration of numerous churches, the opening of new parishes, the improvement of missionary, social and youth ministries, and the modernization of the religious education system. Thanks to your pastoral endeavours the three parts of the Russian Orthodox Church, which were formed after the 1917 Revolution, were reunited.

Sixteen states constitute the canonical territory of the Russian Orthodox Church, and beyond it there are over sixty countries in which there are more than twenty dioceses, almost 1000 active parishes, and over forty monasteries and convents. More

recently, the Patriarchal Exarchates in Western Europe, centred in Paris, and in Southeast Asia, centred in Singapore, as well as the Patriarchal Exarchate in Africa, have been established. It is largely the result of your pastoral ministry and your high international authority both among the leaders of the countries under the canonical jurisdiction of the Russian Church and the leaders of other states.

To further promote the Word of Christ in the world such bodies for improving the activities of the Russian Church as the Supreme Church Council and the Inter-Council Presence have been set up.

Fifteen years of your pastoral ministry are associated with an increase in the number of Orthodox educational organizations, the intensification of the study of The Basics of Orthodox Culture, the growth of the number of theological academies and seminaries, the permanent social service of the Russian Church with its self-help groups, homes, sisterhoods, “mercy” buses and volunteer associations of various profiles. Your personal example, your heartfelt concern for the needs of people and Orthodoxy help us

all take a fresh look at the concept of Christian duty. You teach us to live according to the commandments of Christ, which means according to conscience and faith.

You initiated the celebration of annual memorial services on 30th October in Russia for all Orthodox Christians who died innocently during the years of Soviet repressions or were imprisoned without guilt. For you the protection of Christians – in whatever countries they live and to whatever nations they belong – is one of the main prerogatives of your life.

And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus, the Epistle to the Philippians says (4:7). These beautiful, exalted words are also a sign of your Primatial ministry.

The *Russian Mind* magazine editorial team cordially congratulates you, Your Holiness, on the fifteenth anniversary of your enthronement and wishes you good health and God's help in your high and responsible Patriarchal ministry.

On behalf of the *Russian Mind* magazine team,
Prince Alexander Trubetskoy

UNIVERSAL VARIETY OF CHRISTMAS

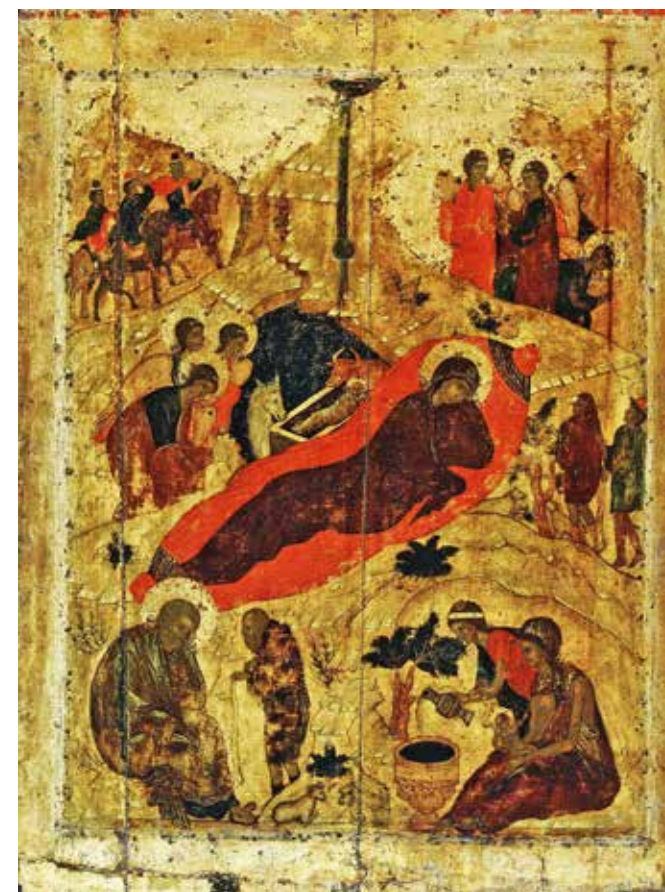
Christmas is a holiday for everyone and a holiday of everyone, and this is its precious uniqueness for all times

By DR. AUGUSTINE SOKOLOVSKI,
Doctor of Theology, priest

“Glorify to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will among men.” This short hymn of the Nativity of Christ is found at the very beginning of the Gospel of Luke (2:14) in the description of the angelic praise to God at the birth of Jesus Christ. Perhaps, in the entire Bible there are no words that would be repeated by all people on earth from year to year, regardless of continents, countries, peoples, as these words sound in all world languages.

The remembrance of the birth of Jesus Christ into the world annually attracts attention of a huge number of people. It absorbs many meanings, and, unlike other biblical memories that remain the property of the Church, it is rightfully considered a universal, ecumenical, global celebration.

At the same time, in the Orthodox liturgical calendar, Christmas is one of the twelve main holidays, traditionally called the Twelve Great Feasts. However, in terms of its significance, historical role and scale of celebration in the Church and secular community, Christmas is



Icon of the Nativity of Christ, from the Feasts tier of the iconostasis in the Annunciation Cathedral of the Moscow Kremlin. 1410s

undoubtedly the greatest celebration among all.

The simultaneous ecclesiastical and secular nature of the Christmas celebration is reflected in its preparation. Thus, in the Western Christian tradition, Christmas is preceded by the period of Advent. Consisting of the four Sundays

preceding the holiday and the weeks between them, Advent is a time of attentive anticipation of the main holiday, and, in this sense of preparation, already contains moments of the upcoming celebration.

In Eastern Christianity, the way of waiting for Christmas was historically stricter and ascetic, and is currently preserved in the Church as the forty-day Nativity Fast. However, this fasting time itself contains a significant number of indulgences, and the liturgical service includes wonderful hymns and a considerable number of celebrations in honour of the Old Testament righteous and many great saints.

Thus, believers have the opportunity to draw inspiration from church services to look forward to the holiday, and people of good will, who are not

ready to visibly identify themselves with the Church, approach the holiday in numerous phenomena of public life and culture that touch on the Christmas theme or are directly dedicated to the Nativity of Jesus Christ.

Along with the Roman Catholic Church, the churches and church communities



"Adoration of the Magi." Fresco of a cave church, Cappadocia. 12th century

of Protestantism, Orthodoxy represents one of the three main forms of the historical existence of Christianity on Earth. For the vast majority of Christians, the date of celebrating Christmas is common. The Christmas celebration begins on the night of December 24.

At the same time, among Orthodox people all over the world, the Russian, Serbian, Georgian, Jerusalem, Polish Orthodox Churches, as well as Mount Athos in Greece, follow the Julian calendar in their internal liturgical life. It "lags" behind the modern secular Gregorian calendar by 13 days, and therefore the Nativity of Christ in these churches and countries is celebrated on January 7.

It is interesting that among Western Christians there is a belief that the Orthodox have Epiphany "instead" of Christmas. However, this is not the case and should be reminded of this. After all, once upon a time, more than one and a half millennia ago, Christmas and Epiphany really represented a single celebration, but starting from the 4th–5th centuries, they began to be celebrated separately.

The only exception here is the so-called Ancient Oriental Churches: Coptic, Armenian Apostolic, and others, who celebrate Christmas and Epiphany as a single celebration in honour of the appearance of God in the world. This joint celebration of Epiphany, as a single event, owes its origin to the ancient Eastern Christian tradition, in which the birthday of Jesus Christ was not initially celebrated separately. In turn, in the West of the Christian world, a tradition arose to celebrate the Nativity of Jesus Christ at the same time.

It is important to note that the first three centuries of Christianity were time of persecution by pagan authorities. Palestine was part of the Roman Empire. Christianity was originally perceived by the Romans as part of the ancient Jewish religion and, because of this antiquity, was allowed. However, very soon a division arose between Jews and Christians. It was providential in nature, that is, it was part of the divine plan.

After all, if Christianity had remained part of the Jewish religion, then the gospel of faith in One God

and Jesus Christ sent by Him would not have been able to overcome the boundaries of the national dimension, previously characteristic of the biblical tradition in Judaism, and would not have become a worldwide confession.

At the same time, the division between Judaism and Christianity caused the Roman pagan authorities to take a new look at Christianity. From now on it became a new religion and was no longer permitted. Until the very moment of the adoption of Christianity by Constantine the Great (274–337) as the official religion of the Roman Empire, it was brutally persecuted. Although not all Roman emperors formally initiated systematic persecution, Christians often became victims of the spontaneous wrath of pagan mobs.

Constant persecution by the authorities and the surrounding population in the first three centuries of the history of the Christian Church contributed to the formation among Christians of a special paradoxical, largely tragic worldview. An important component of this view of the world was the expectation of the imminent Second Coming of Christ. It was the belief that the Lord Jesus would soon return to complete history and transform the world. New Testament texts indicate that the expectation of the imminent, speedy return of the Lord was an important component of the worldview of the Holy Apostles themselves.

In this regard, it seems obvious that in its early stage of existence Christianity did not know many and varied liturgical feasts but celebrated exclusively the Resurrection of Christ. In parallel, in various Christian churches there were two ways of such celebration.

Thus, some churches celebrated Easter once a year on the first Sunday after the first full moon following the spring equinox. Other Churches,

mainly in Asia Minor, in accordance with the biblical text, celebrated Easter on the 14th day of the first spring lunar month of Nisan, no matter what day of the week such a celebration fell on.

Both Christian branches celebrated Easter weekly, on the first day of the new week, which was, and continues to be, our Sunday. This constant celebration of Sunday was directly related to the expectation of the imminent Second Coming of Jesus. Christians were filled with the conviction that the Lord's return was soon to take place, and therefore they should rush to meet him in the Eucharistic service.

The Apostle Paul wrote about this in his Epistle to the Corinthians, when he explained the meaning of Christ's words about the establishment of the Eucharist: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until He comes" (1 Cor. 11:26). This regular weekly celebration of the Resurrection of Christ has been preserved in all Christian traditions. Over time, it lost its eschatological character of expectation of the Return of the Lord, and in church language it received the name Little Easter.

The cessation of persecution and the proclamation of Christianity as the official confession of the Roman Empire under Constantine the Great contributed to the fact that the expectation of the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus in Christianity and among Christians began to gradually fade away. The consequence of this cessation of previous expectations was the birth of new memories and celebrations in Christian worship, one of which was Christmas.

Knowing this helps us correctly answer the question of which celebration, Christmas or Easter, is actually the most important in the daily life of Christians. After all, history, theology, and the rules

of worship speak of the primacy of Easter, while the perception of things and spontaneous attitudes often indicate that Christmas is considered as the most important Christian holiday in the life of society. In fact, there is no contradiction, because Christmas is a transformed expectation of the Coming of the Lord, born from the Christians' sense of the ongoing history of the world, while the celebration of Christ's Easter became a wish for each other's happiness and joy here and now.

Just as for quite a long time two practices of celebrating Easter coexisted in Christianity (one of which, on the 14th day of Nisan, was inspired by the Old Testament tradition of remembering the biblical exodus, and the other was based on the New Testament worldview of the Resurrection of Christ as a new unique event that changed the course of history), in defining the reasons for determining the date of celebration of the Nativity of Christ, two different explanations were formed.

The first of them, which in the language of the Church is called theological, says that the date of December 25 depends on the date of the Annunciation, which was historically celebrated on March 25. According to biblical belief of an era close in time to the earthly life of the Lord Jesus, the Messiah was supposed to die on the day of his conception. According to Scripture and the faith of the Church, the Lord Jesus "was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary." He was conceived by the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit in the event of the Annunciation.

It is obvious that the specific days of the earthly life of Jesus Christ are difficult to verify. Perhaps the only such date remains the day of the crucifixion, which probably fell on March 25. It is interesting, that it

was astronomers, based on the rules for determining the celebration of the Jewish Passover, who made successful attempts to confirm this particular date. This is where the explanation of the celebration of the Nativity of Christ comes from, as nine months inherent in human nature, and counted from the day of the Annunciation. Some ancient traditions and interpreters also believed that the crucifixion of Christ historically took place on this day.

Another explanation of the date of celebrating the Nativity of Christ on December 25 is called historical. It comes from the fact, that it was on this day that the birth of a new sun was celebrated in Roman paganism. According to a number of researchers, the Roman Church, wanting to end the dominance of this pagan tradition, deliberately began to celebrate the event of Christmas on this very day. Thus, an ancient pagan practice, which previously might have seemed irresistible, was given a Christian character. Over time, due to the authority of Roman Christianity, this practice spread to the East, which previously knew only the celebration of the Epiphany.

Both points of view have their strengths and weaknesses. In a certain sense, they will complement each other, and, at the same time, point to the fundamental inexhaustibility of human perception of the single event of the Nativity of Christ.

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will among men." Just as two rationales arose around the very date of this celebration, over the centuries the Nativity of Christ became both a secular and religious memory. Christmas is a holiday for everyone and a holiday of everyone, and this is its precious uniqueness for all times. Christmas is the day when the blessing of man and the joy of God unconditionally come together.

COMPANION OF PETER THE GREAT, SAVA VLADISLAVICH-RAGUZINSKY

*The merchant from Ragusa, who was in the Russian diplomatic service,
played a prominent role in the history of Russia*

By KARINA ENFENJYAN



Monument to S. L. Vladislavich-Raguzinsky. Staraya Ladoga Canal, Shlisselburg, Russia. Sculptor: G. Lazic-Chapsa. 2011

Count Sava Lukich Vladislavich-Raguzinsky played a significant role in strengthening the positions of the Russian state on the international stage, developing the country's economy, consolidating its trade and diplomatic ties with Europe, and contributing to the improvement of relations with the Slavic peoples of the Balkans. He was a successful negotiator, a talented diplomat, a true secret advisor, and a collaborator of Peter the Great.

A Serb by nationality, he was born on 16 January 1669 in the city of Herceg Novi near Ragusa (now Dubrovnik in Croatia) to the family of a descendant of the Bosnian princes Vladislavić. Trade, which he began to engage in in his youth, brought him one day to Constantinople, where he was able to demonstrate amazing diplomatic abilities, carrying out unofficial assignments of Prince Vasily Golitsyn and the ambassador to Turkey Yemelyan Ukraintsev. For several years, Raguzinsky was also a secret agent of Hetman Ivan Mazepa in Turkey.

In 1703, Raguzinsky visited Moscow for the first time, and Peter the Great, having heard about his commercial and diplomatic talents, granted him great privileges for free trade in Russia with the payment of duties on the same basis as Russian merchants.

Raguzinsky achieved a lot in the time allotted to him by fate.

An intelligent and efficient Serb, who spoke European and Oriental languages, had great connections in the Balkans and Turkey and had a special gift for winning people over, fit well into the court of the Russian Tsar in the most difficult period of Russian-Turkish relations. Based on the information that Raguzinsky received from insiders in Turkey, he was able to predict the Russo-Ottoman War, of which he warned the Chancellor of the Russian Empire, Gavriil Golovkin, in his letter on 31 December 1708.

For faithful and diligent service, Peter the Great granted Raguzinsky a "court" on Pokrovka Street (previously owned by boyar V. F. Naryshkin) in 1708, promoted him to the rank of court councillor, and granted him the Russian nobility and the title of the Illyrian Count.

Having settled in Moscow, Raguzinsky did not forget about his roots and dreamed of seeing the peoples of the Balkans independent. In 1711, as a representative of Russia in Montenegro and Moldova, the count took an active part in the Prut River Campaign, the goal of which was to liberate the Slavs of the Balkan Peninsula from the Turkish yoke. It was Raguzinsky who advised Peter the Great to appeal to the Christian peoples of the Balkans to support Russia in the war against Turkey. And he even translated into Russian the work of the Dalmatian Benedictine Mavro Orbini *Kingdom of the Slavs*, who substantiated



Memorial plaque on the wall of the Annunciation Church of the Alexander Nevsky Lavra

the idea of the ethnic and linguistic kinship of the Slavic peoples.

In subsequent years, the count continued to successfully combine commercial and diplomatic activities. In 1716–1722 he travelled to Italy and conducted negotiations in Venice and Rome as a representative of Peter the Great. On behalf of the Tsar, he ordered and organised the delivery to Russia of a large number of magnificent works of art, including marble sculptures for the Summer Garden in Saint Petersburg; hired Italian painters, stonemasons, and shipwrights to serve in Russia; helped organise the training of Russian painters and sculptors from Italian masters. He even managed to obtain permission from Pope Clement XI to export from Italy the statue of the Venus Tauride, purchased by Peter's

agent Y. I. Kologrivov for the Kunstkamera. Today, this unique statue is in the Hermitage in Saint Petersburg.

Interestingly, it was Raguzinsky who presented Peter the Great with the extraordinary gift of Ibrahim Hannibal, an Ethiopian man destined to become the great-grandfather of Alexander Pushkin.

The outstanding diplomatic abilities of Count Raguzinsky were revealed during a responsible mission to the Qing Empire: having headed the Russian embassy in China in 1725, the count concluded the Burin Treaty in August 1727, according to which both parties recognised the existing Russian-Chinese borders. In October of the same year, these borders were fixed by the Treaty of Kyakhta,

which, in addition, legally formalised the existence of the Russian spiritual mission in Beijing.

The town of Troitskosavsk (now Kyakhta in Buryatia), founded by Raguzinsky, remained the main point of trade between Russia and China until the second half of the 19th century.

Upon returning to Saint Petersburg, Raguzinsky created detailed reports about China for the government, and in 1731 he wrote the book *Secret Information on the Strength and Situation of the Chinese State*.

For his service to the Russian state, the count was awarded the orders of the Holy Apostle Andrew the First-Called and Saint Alexander Nevsky.

Sava Vladislavich-Raguzinsky completed his life journey on 17 June 1738. He was buried in the Annunciation Church of the Alexander Nevsky Lavra.

TO OUR COMPATRIOTS

THREE KINGS OF BEASTS

How does Russian animalier art exist today, how is it alive?

By ALEXEY SHULGIN



Vadim Gorbatov

Photo: Ekaterina Sofronova

While the three patriarchs are alive, animalier art is also alive: it rests on them, like the Earth of the ancients – on three elephants.

Vadim Gorbatov

I met Vadim Alekseevich in November 2018, visiting his workshop in the attic of a residential building in Northern Chertanovo. In the old days, all of us, residents of Chertanovo, literally knew each other, if not by name, then at least we could see each other in a store, at the post office or on the street. It turned out that Gorbatov's wife, Natalya Mikhailovna, taught history at the school on Krasny Mayak Street,

where I studied. We could only marvel at how small the world is. The main thing is that we were connected by our love for the Bitsa Forest, where both the artist and I walked along the same paths.

How beautiful that forest was! The area with oak trees gave way to linden trees, then a birch grove appeared, behind which a black spruce forest appeared. My heart sank when in winter I walked under the shade of not old fir trees and, having gotten used to the darkness, began to look around. Here a tit flies from one bush to another, from branch to branch; a colourful, gypsy-like jay screams obnoxiously overhead; with a barely audible rustle, a nuthatch descends head-first down the trunk;

s o m e w h e r e bullfinches call to each other and the croak of a raven can be heard. And you can see footprints on the snow surface. The forest lives its own life.

How glad I was to talk about all this with Vadim Alekseevich, without fear that I would be misunderstood. And Gorbatov himself was surrounded in his workshop by wonderful things, objects and little items. Long feathers of various

birds hung on the walls: raptors, woodcocks, curlews. A plaster stamp of an animal footprint. Two huge elk antlers (found by the owner himself). Books, books, books. Two works of the master on the walls. One of the pictures will always live in my heart: it's getting dark, the embers of a burnt-out fire are dying out in the snow, the forest is darkening on the horizon, the footprints of a recently departed person stretch towards the forest...

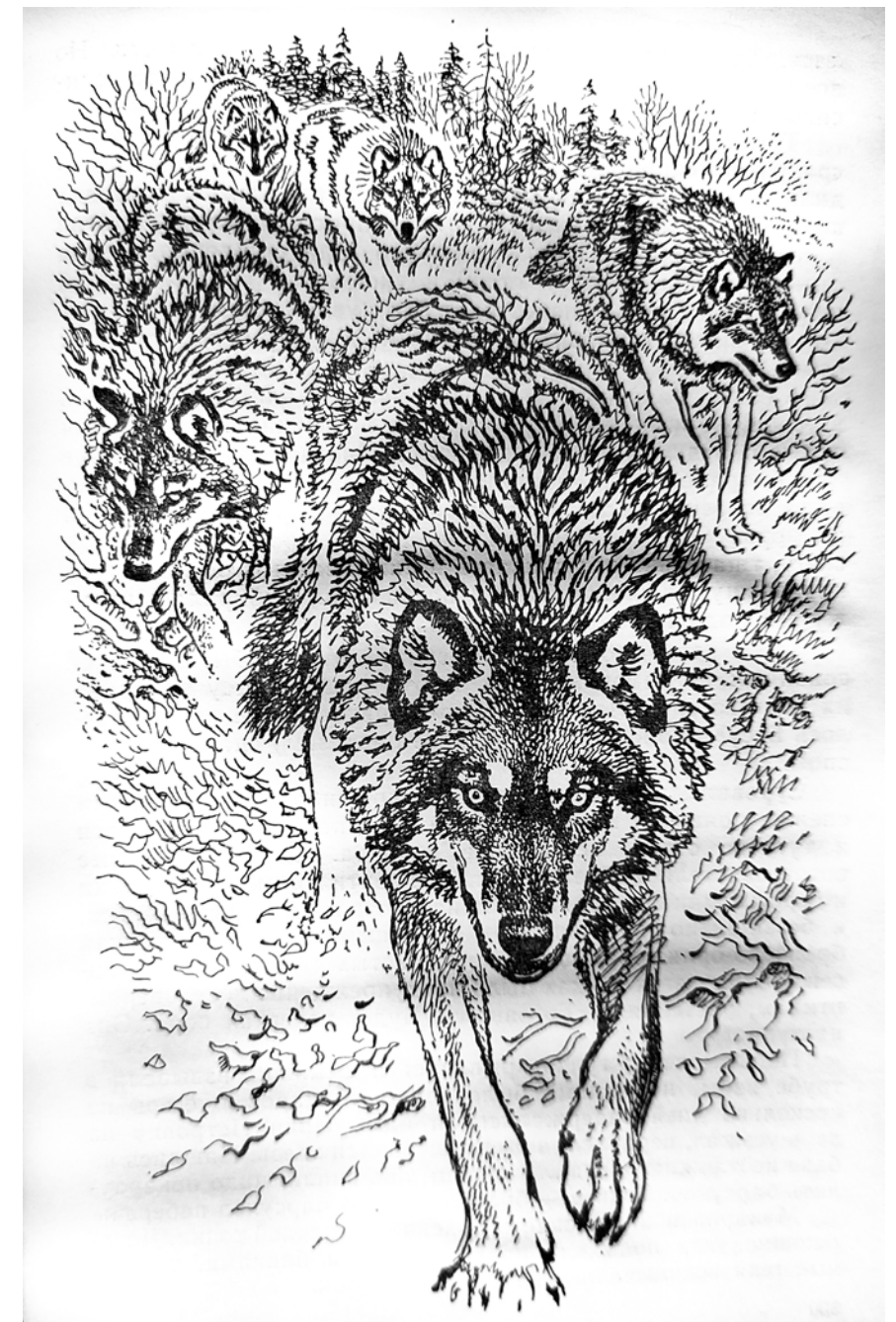
Gorbatov is known in the world primarily as a virtuoso draftsman of birds of prey. I was in first grade when I was given a set of postcards "The Red Book of the USSR", which Gorbatov drew. They still sit on my shelf.

It seems to me that while the artist was making his sketches, I met him in the forest. But shyness did not allow me to come up, stand behind him and watch; it was impossible to interfere with an adult.

The future artist was born in 1940 in the village of Kachalovo, in the south of Moscow (now Northern Butovo district). It was a real village, with the roofs thatched and where the church stretched to the sky. That church named after the Great Martyr Paraskeva Pyatnitsa still stands near the Dmitry Donskoy Boulevard metro station in Moscow. The Gorbatovs lived in their own wooden house. Parents worked at the Beekeeping Institute. His father's name was Alexey Lukich, and the mother's name was Faina Moiseevna.

Vadim Alekseevich told me: "I have been drawing animals since childhood. Ever since I can remember I have been drawing. And it was wartime, there wasn't much to draw with. My brother and I fought over a stub of a pencil, my mother took it away and then gave it to us in rotation. The pencil was a chemical one, because they wrote the number on the palm when we stood in line for flour. There were no coloured pencils at all. I remember: I crushed and rubbed a piece of grass – it would be green paint. If you rub paper with a dandelion, it will turn yellow. My drawings have been preserved. I was three or four years old then."

During the war, his father went to the front, and the family was evacuated to Michurinsk, and then to Altai. As the war ended, difficult times continued. It was hungry, but in the village everyone had their own shed, everyone had their own cattle. The Gorbatovs also had chickens, a pig, and a goat. The boy worked in the garden hilling potatoes and weeding. He also needed to cut and chop wood, feed the goat and the pig, support the goat to



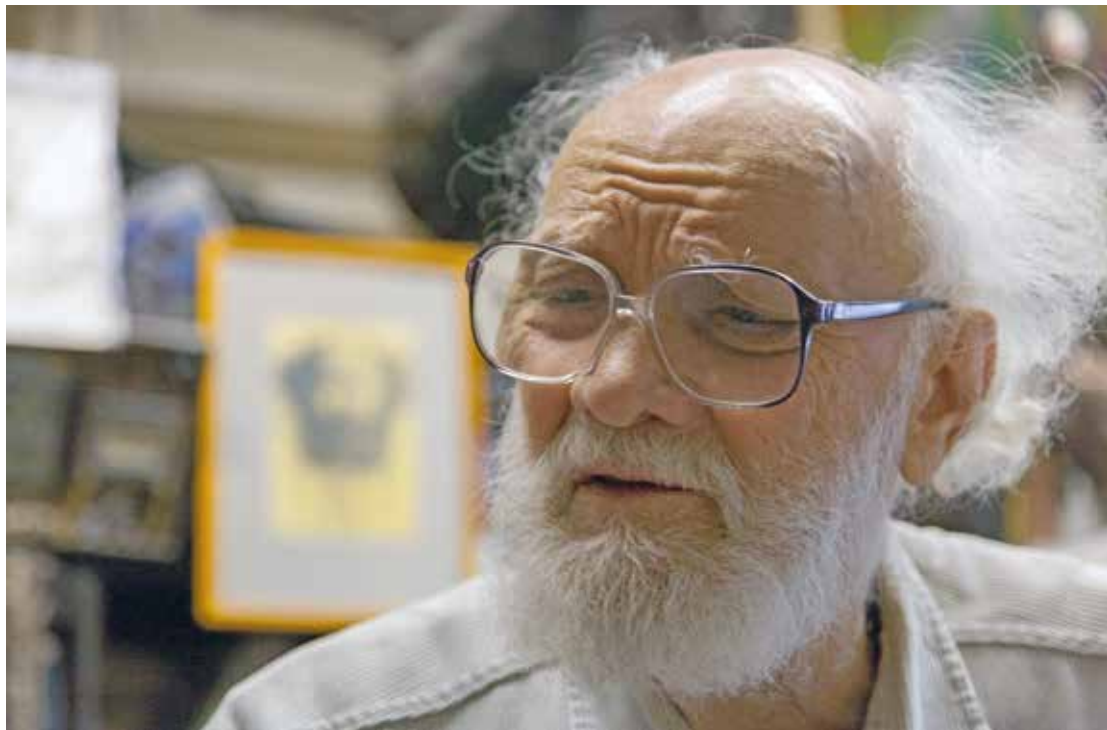
Vadim Gorbatov. Illustration for Victor Potievsky's book "Maga Leads the Flock." 1990

the herd every day and meet her in the evening.

But Vadim was drawn to the forest, and there were elk, black grouse, hazel grouse, woodcock, "everything that nests on the ground." Vadim Alekseevich recalled that even then he went into the forest to draw. He

remembered bird nests, badger and fox holes in the surrounding area.

From our conversations: "I was very passionate about Nikolsky and Komarov, but I am rather indifferent to Vatin. Also Vadim Trofimov... (G. E. Nikolsky, A. N. Komarov, V. A. Vatin, V. V. Trofimov are



Oleg Otroshko

Photo: Ekaterina Sofronova

masters of the animalistic genre who worked in the 20th century. – A.Sh.). Why did I meet them? Why did I even become an artist? I had to go to the intersessional commission of animalist painters to participate in the exhibition. The commission was headed by Vadim Trofimov. I contacted him by phone. I brought my works to his home. He was a friendly person. He looked at my works with surprise. And said to bring them to the exhibition. For the second exhibition, Trofimov asked to bring sketches from life. I brought them to him. He looked and said: ‘Ugh! Amazing. Vadim, when we looked at your work with Vadim Frolov at the first exhibition, we decided that it couldn’t be real, that you were drawing from a photograph. Now it’s clear that you are a true, vibrant artist.’”

One of his well-wishers wrote very accurately about Gorbato: “He suddenly appeared among Moscow animal painters. So much so that the dumbfounded animalistic

community accepted him with great distrust: “Where was he hiding before?” But he wasn’t hiding at all. It’s just that, having been drawing animals since childhood, he didn’t see any opportunity to break into publishing houses, and apparently he didn’t really trust his talent.”

I keep all his emails carefully copied and printed on paper.

“I recently returned from Saint Petersburg,” Vadim Alekseevich wrote to me. “I visited the Hermitage. There is an exhibition of reliefs from the palace of Ashurbanipal in Nineveh. Assyria, 5th–7th centuries BC. I remember these reliefs from my student years. Lion hunting. Wonderful animalistic art. The exhibition is excellent. But it turned out that precisely those reliefs were not delivered. It’s a pity. I was hoping to see them. But still, the trip was not in vain. I wandered around the Russian Museum. And I went hunting. Three Anglo-Russian hounds. For hare and fox. The whole day in the forest, through ravines and

swamps. Two young ardent male dogs tagged along with the elk and left 11 km away. We were able to catch them only by night.”

Once I asked him where it is best to look for elk antlers and when elks shed them. Vadim Alekseevich explained: “The elk sheds his antlers at the beginning of winter, but that period is extended.

Antlers are more often found in dense young growth. Having lost one horn, the elk begins to butt bushes and trees in order to free himself from the second horn. He is uncomfortable, his head tilts to one side. So, if you find one horn, it makes sense to look for a second one near same place. That’s how I found both huge antlers in a young aspen wood near the swamp, which are in the workshop.”

And here’s from another letter: “In our village it’s paradise in the summer. A roe deer came to the house. We saw a fox through the window. Partridges with chicks feed themselves near the house. I didn’t go for mushrooms, but wild strawberries and raspberries are just nearby.”

Grandfather Otroshko

In December 2018, we took a night train to Yaroslavl to see Oleg Pavlovich Otroshko (he was born in 1939). The winter day is short. It’s snowing quietly, snowflakes are

swirling. The trees froze without movement. The Lunka River has calmed down. Suddenly wood grouse flew over the village of Rai. Grandfather Otroshko is sitting in the log cabin – an artist, a hunter, an experienced man. He should go get some firewood and light the stove, but it’s unbearable. Winter has come to Rai. It’s time to leave.

“My gold,” Otroshko says in a singing voice, “my body was transported to Yaroslavl yesterday. I sat there (in Rai – A.Sh.) hungry. The bread had run out, it was damp and cold, and my ears were freezing on the stove.” Thank God, the grandfather survived another summer in the village.

Rai is a village in the Yaroslavl region, not far from the ancient town of Danilov. In the 1990s, Otroshko bought a hut here. And Rai on Lunka became a “patrimony” and “hunting ground” for Oleg Pavlovich. How long he hunted there! And how many paintings he painted! He calls sketches from Rai ZhGDRs, which stands for: pictorial graphic and decorative works. A great worker, he made hundreds of sketches. There are thousands of sketches in the folders. All folders are themed: here are wolves, there are wood grouse...

Ayu and Boy, two dachshunds, saved him from a wild boar and distracted him for a short time, which was enough to reload the gun and discharge it at the boar. The stuffed animal, like a trophy, hangs in Otroshko’s workshop in Yaroslavl. The grandfather grins, nodding at the dead head: “Look, he’s hanging on my wall. But it could have been different.”

Otroshko lives in Yaroslavl not far from Mashinostroiteley Avenue, on the 13th floor of a brick building. Simply everything is there in his home. An old hunting horn hangs here, and on the windowsill lies a church book bound in black leather



Oleg Otroshko. “The Singing Wood Grouse.” Linocut. 1986

with intricate embossing. Lots of skins: wolf, boar, bear. Stuffed wild boar, wood grouse, partridge, snipe, woodcock, crow...

There were very few artists-hunters (Alexey Komarov, Fyodor Glebov, Evgeny Charushin), since animal painters were mostly peaceful observers. And Otroshko, a lover of hunting with hounds, often argued with his colleagues.

The patriarch of the genre, D. V. Gorlov, wrote in one of his letters to his young comrade: “The beast is a masterpiece of the beauty

of a living being, expressing its harmony and harmonious unity with nature. Decoration of nature. An artist must not only explore, but be in love with it. This is why today murder (hunting) is a crime. Hunting is passion, not love.” Otroshko does not comment on Gorlov; he loves the patriarch and is grateful to him for his kind attitude.

– Now I want to paint a new picture. Look: I’m sitting naked in a barrel, like Diogenes, and all my hunting dogs of my entire life have gathered around me, eh?



Valery Simonov

Photo: Ekaterina Sofronova

I think the idea is excellent. On one of my visits to Yaroslavl, I saw a charcoal sketch of this painting on canvas.

“Hullo, my gold,” Otroshko barely says, rustling. “I’m buried alive. You are now talking to a corpse...”

This is the usual beginning of almost every conversation we have, but gradually he becomes inspired:

– In a year I want to hold an anniversary exhibition and make it like never before. And you will not be ashamed to say that you knew this crazy artist.

Oleg Pavlovich is a joker if I ever saw one. And an amazing artist. How to determine that an artist is outstanding? It’s very simple: remember his paintings. His *Day of Reconciliation and Harmony* (a mirror of modern Russian life), *The Singing Wood Grouse*, *Dream in Rai*. *Pushkin and I by candlelight*, *Wood Grouse over Rai* come into my view. This is my gold portfolio, things with which I go through life, like Pushkin, Blok, Rublev, Dovlatov...

Every year Otroshko is eager to move to his Rai. In the village he rarely gets in touch, saves his phone charging, complains about loneliness and cold. Now Rai is just one Otroshko’s house remaining from the entire village. A bear comes into his garden to eat some apples. Crucian carp population grows in the pond. Wood grouse fly without fear. Mushrooms grow abundantly behind the house. It’s a forest kingdom. And Oleg Pavlovich himself looks like the god Pan, a leshy. Barely crawling, with a staff, he walks along familiar paths, picking up mushrooms, berries, herbs. But more often he stands behind a French style easel, paints pictures, works.

He told me with bitterness that some high-ranking artists were slandering: “Ooh, he started a chicken coop!” They did not want to see Russia and the love for nature that brings a person closer to God behind Otroshko’s animals and birds.

Restrained in praise, the artist D. V. Gorlov wrote: “Oleg Otroshko has great talent and technique. It’s not

easy to work sincerely, honestly, without tricks, with an open heart and love.”

And I think more and more often: it’s time to go to Yaroslavl to visit the grandfather, see him, pick up some herbs, bring him magazines, finally talk in comfort, hear: “My gold...” After all, we are loved so little in this world.

Valery Simonov

Valery Vasilyevich Simonov... I write this name and feel a wave of warmth sweeping through my heart.

In 1962, the young artist Valery Simonov overtook the initiative, undertaking to organise a second animalistic exhibition. In one of the conversations I asked him: “Valery Vasilyevich, why did you need to take on this matter? After all, an exhibition is always a bustle, pain, and you will definitely lose a lot of energy.” He replied: “Well, of course. Because I was already a mature artist, this (art – A. Sh.) is interesting to me, but I had no one to compare with how I work, what I do. Moreover, at that moment there was no one and nowhere to show easel graphic works. And most importantly, you know, everyone was still alive – Gorlov, Trofimov, Vatagin, Komarov. Everyone was alive. And why not make an exhibition?”

Valery Simonov was born in 1940 and went through all the ordeals as people who saw the war.

“My father was a military man, he worked at the airfield in Rzhev,” said Valery Vasilyevich. “When the war started, we were evacuated. Rzhev



Valery Simonov. “Moose.” Gouache. 1970s

was bombed first by the Germans, then by ours. My father was involved in the evacuation of factories. He sent his family to Alaty, then we moved to Vladimir, Sudogda, and the evacuation ended for us in Moscow. As soon as the Germans were thrown back from the Volokolamsk highway, people began to return home. In Moscow we lived in Studenchesky passage near VDNKh, on the site of the current Cosmos Hotel. But then there was remote outskirts: Rostokinsky passage, the Central Station of the Young Naturalists. Studenchesky passage was lined with two-story barracks. We lived in 8th passage. I learned the corridor-type arrangement there: the rooms where families lived were on both sides of the corridor. Then in Moscow we lived near the Kievsky railway station. The next address was a house

in Krasnokazarmennaya Street. We lived in other apartments too.”

I recall the artist’s semi-basement studio in Studenetsky Lane, in the house where the poet Mayakovsky lived and died.

In days of painful doubts, I go to 1905 Goda Street to visit my friend in another world. God generously endowed Valera Simonov with talent so the young man could do anything: paint in oils, draw in gouache, watercolours, felt-tip pens, pencils, charcoal, sanguine, sauce. He created sculptures in clay, carved wood, worked with plastic, made molds and cast plaster sculptures. He was not above making magnets, whistles, and jewellery. He resembles Mozart with the ease and persuasiveness of his creations. I run to Simonov to get support, to hear his wisely ironic cooing.

Valery Vasilyevich is my consultant. He always remembers and talks

about all animal painters, because he knows everyone. With his help, I wrote about G. E. Nikolsky.

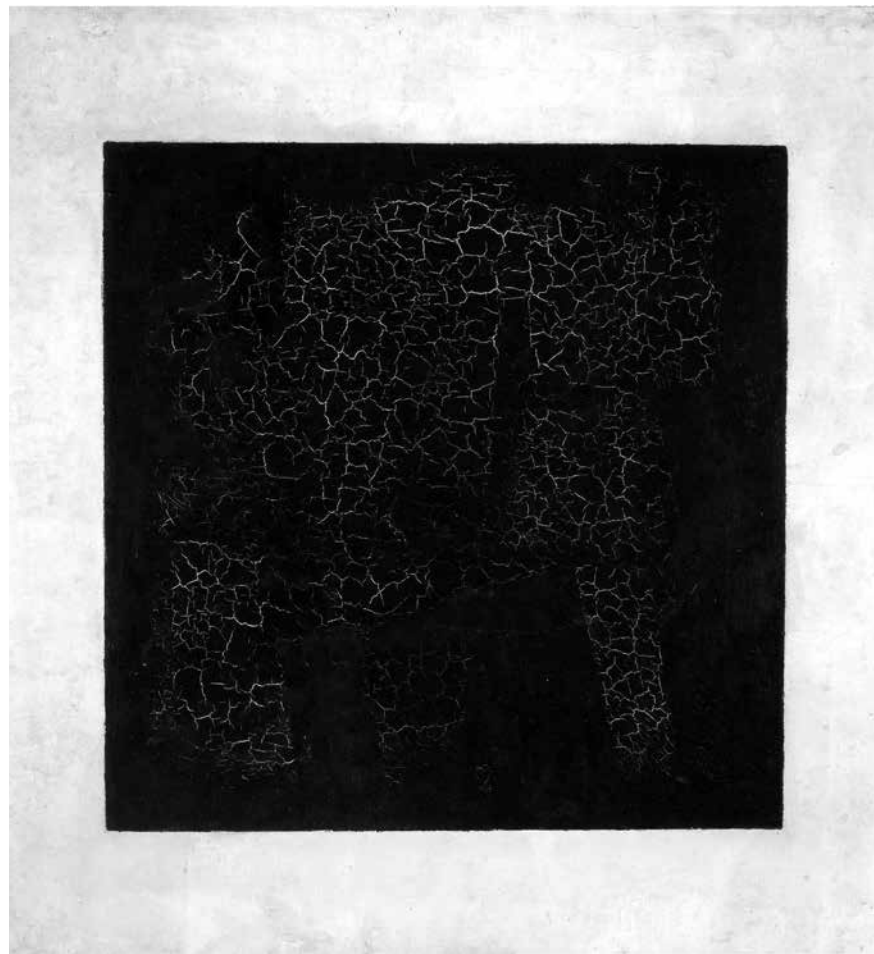
Simonov also writes ironic stories. “And the wolf slept heavily and anxiously. Life continued in his dream. In a dream, together with his friends, he drove and drove his victim, straining his will, strength and skill, so as not to come home empty this time. So he had to run, run, run. He loved his grey girlfriend very much. He so wants to bring his prey home, meet her at the doorway and lick her on the nose. You cannot pull a fish out of a pond without labour. Hunting is the whole meaning of his life for the sake of his beloved girlfriend and puppies...”

I wanted to write an ode to my friends, the three Kings of Beasts, whose presence in this world makes life a little kinder, better, more meaningful!

THE MYSTERY OF THE BLACK SQUARE

The 145th anniversary of the birth of Kazimir Malevich

By OKSANA KOPENKINA,
art analyst, founder of the Arts Diary & Pad website



Kazimir Malevich, *Black Square*. 1915. The State Tretyakov Gallery. Moscow

Probably, everyone thought about the paradox of Malevich's *Black Square*. You can't think of anything easier than a black square. There is nothing easier than drawing a black square... Nevertheless, it is recognized as a masterpiece. If today it goes to open auction, collectors will buy it for 140 million dollars!

Obviously, there is something special about *The Black Square*. Invisible to the ordinary viewer. It only at first glance seems that such a masterpiece could be created by everyone: both a child and an adult without art education. But not everything in this picture is so simple.

The Black Square is not really a square. Its sides are not equal. And the opposite sides are not parallel to each other. In addition, *The Black Square* is not completely black.

Chemical analysis showed that Malevich used three home-made paints. The first is burnt bone. The second is black ochre. And the third is natural dark green component. Malevich also added chalk to remove the gloss effect of oil paints.

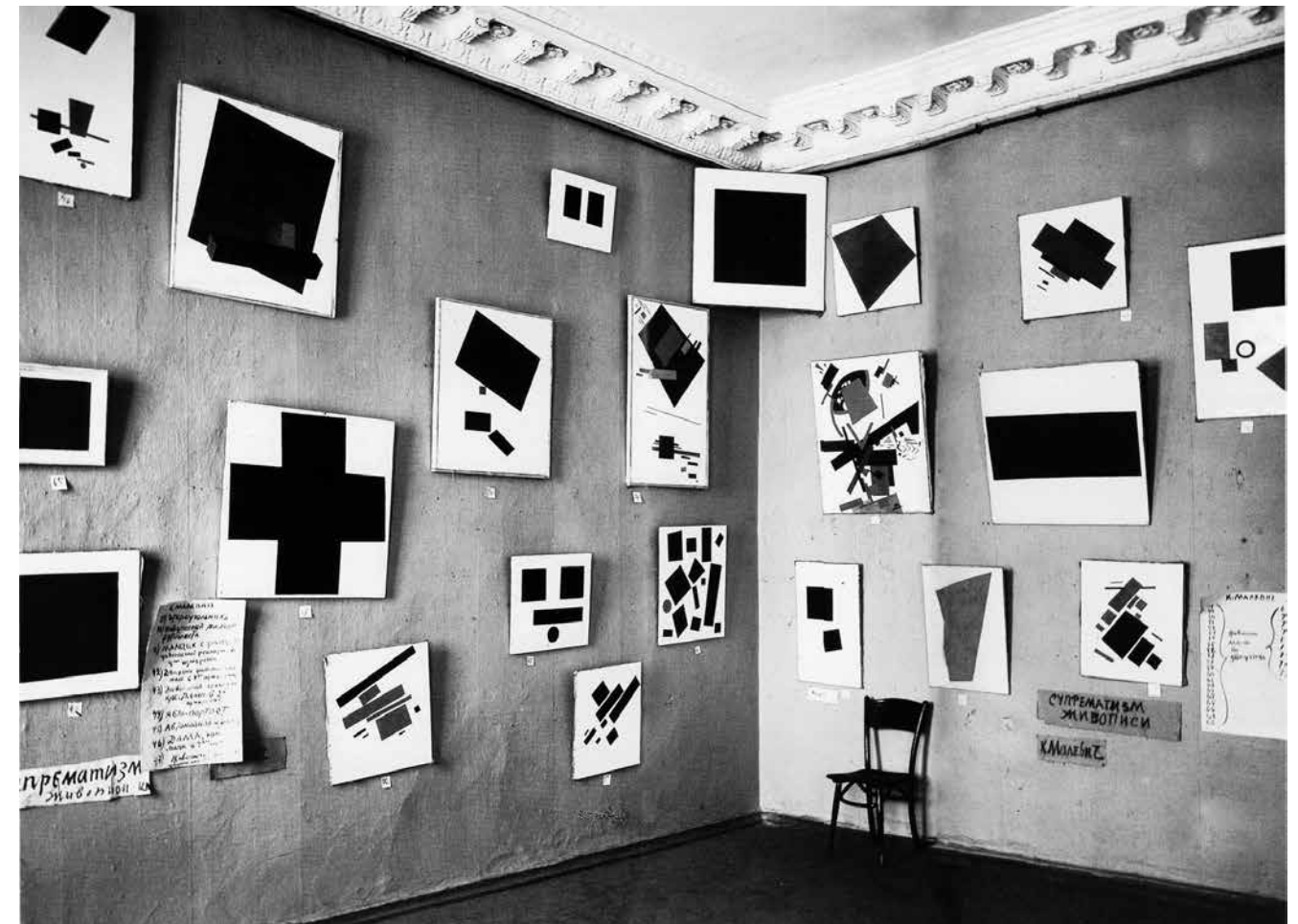
That is, the artist did not just take the first black paint and draw the square. At least he spent a day preparing materials.

If it were an accidentally painted picture, the artist would not copy it. Over the next 15 years, he created three more *Black Squares*. If you saw all four paintings (two are stored in the Tretyakov Gallery, one in the Russian Museum and one more in the Hermitage), then you probably noticed how much they are not similar.

The first *Square* of 1915 is considered the most energetically charged. The thing is in the successful selection of shades of black and white, as well as in the composition of colours.

All four paintings are not similar either in size or colour intensity.

On the *Square* in 1915, you probably noticed cracks (craquelure). The bottom layer of paint is visible through it. These are the colours of a different picture. It was written in proto-suprematist style.



0,10 Exhibition: A section of Suprematist works by Kazimir Malevich exhibited for the first time. 1915 (Petrograd)

That's not all. Below it is another image. Already the third in a row. Written in the style of cubo-futurism. Therefore, craquelures appeared. Too thick paint.

Why such difficulties? As many as three images on one surface!

Perhaps this is an accident. It happens. The artist has an idea. He wants to express it right away. But there may not be a canvas at hand. But even if there is a canvas, it needs to be prepared, primed. Then insignificant pictures are used. Or those that the artist considers unsuccessful.

It turned out a kind of picturesque nesting doll. Evolution. From cubo-futurism to cubo-suprematism and to pure suprematism in *The Black Square*.

Suprematism

Malevich came up with a new direction in painting: Suprematism. *The Black Square* was created as part of this direction.

Supreme means excellent. Since the artist considered it the highest point in the development of painting. This is a whole school. Like impressionism. Like academism. Only this school was created by one person. Kazimir Malevich. He attracted many supporters and followers.

Malevich was able to talk about his brainchild clearly and charismatically. He urged to completely abandon figurativeness, that is, from the image of objects. Suprematism is an art that creates, not repeats, as the artist said.

If we remove the pathos and look at his theory from the side, then we cannot but recognize its greatness. Malevich, as befits a genius, felt in which direction the wind was blowing. The time of individual perception was running out. Now came the age of mass culture, built on simplified forms and pure colours. Malevich understood that art should not lag behind. Or maybe even able to lead this movement.

He invented, in fact, a new pictorial language. Proportional to the coming time, which is about to come. And the language has its own alphabet.

The Black Square is the main sign of this alphabet. "Zero forms", as Malevich said.

Before Malevich, there was another alphabet invented by Giotto



Kazimir Malevich. Self-portrait. 1933

at the beginning of the XIV century. This alphabet was the basis of all art. This is a perspective, volume, emotional expressiveness.

Malevich has a completely different language. Simple forms in which colour is given a different role. It is not to convey nature. And not to create the illusion of volume. It is expressive by itself.

The Black Square is the main “letter” in the new alphabet. Square, because it is the first form. Black colour because it absorbs all colours.

Malevich also creates *The Black Cross* and *The Black Circle*. Simple elements. But they are also derivatives of the black square.

A circle appears if the square is rotated on a plane. The cross consists of several squares.

Then Malevich from his alphabet adds new “words”. It combines colour forms in simple, complex, and very complex combinations.

Malevich worked in the style of Suprematism for several years. And then the incredible happened. He suddenly returned to figurativeness, which he had denied for so long... One could

regard this as inconsistency. Like, “played” a beautiful theory and that’s enough. In fact, this language wanted to be used in the world of forms. And Malevich obediently returned to this world. But portrayed him using the new language of Suprematism.

So, *The Black Square* is not the end of art, as it is sometimes called. This is the beginning of a contemporary art.

Then came a new stage. Language wanted to serve people. And it passed into our lives.

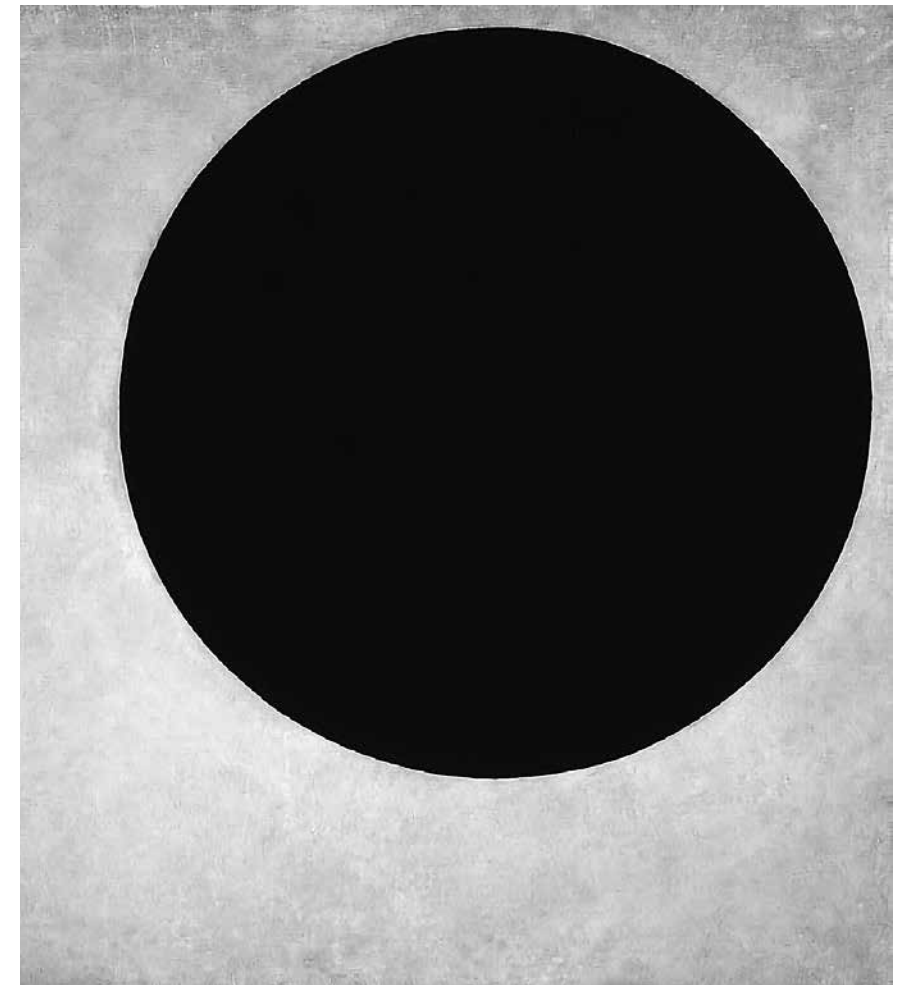
Having created Suprematism, Malevich did everything so that it would not gather dust in museums but would go to the masses. He also painted porcelain. He created patterns for fabrics. He drew sketches of dresses. But during his life he was able to “put it on” only on the heroes of his paintings.

Malevich’s supporters spoke in the language of *The Black Square*. The most famous of them is El Lissitzky, who invented printed fonts, as well as a new book design. He was inspired by the theory of Suprematism and *The Black Square* by Malevich.

This design of books seems natural to us. But only because Malevich’s style has firmly entered our lives. Our contemporaries – designers, architects and fashion designers, admit that they often find inspiration in the works of Malevich. Among them is one of the most famous architects, Zaha Hadid (1950–2016).

The Black Square as the letter of the alphabet

Almost every viewer tries to understand Malevich with the help of a familiar language. The language of the naturalistic image that Giotto invented in the 14th century and which was subsequently developed by Renaissance artists.



The Black Circle. About 1923. The State Russian Museum. Saint Petersburg

Many are trying to evaluate Black Square by inappropriate criteria. Like – not like. Beautiful – not beautiful. Realistic – not realistic.

Awkwardness appears. Discouragement. Because The Black Square remains deaf to such estimates. What is left? Only condemn or ridicule.

Nonsense. “The child will draw better” or “I can do that too” and so on.

Now evaluate The Black Square as the letter of the alphabet. Like an atom of a molecule. Like an electron of a magnetic field. Then it will become clear why this is a masterpiece. It is impossible to evaluate The Black Square on its own. But only with the space that he serves.

Malevich was famous during his lifetime. But he did not receive material benefits from this. Once he decided to attend an exhibition in Paris (1929). And he asked the authorities to let him go there ... on foot. Because he had no money for the road. The authorities realized that an artist who came to the exhibition on foot would undermine their authority. Therefore, 40 rubles were allocated for the trip.

But after 2 weeks he was urgently called by telegram back. And on arrival he was immediately arrested. On a denunciation. Like a German spy.

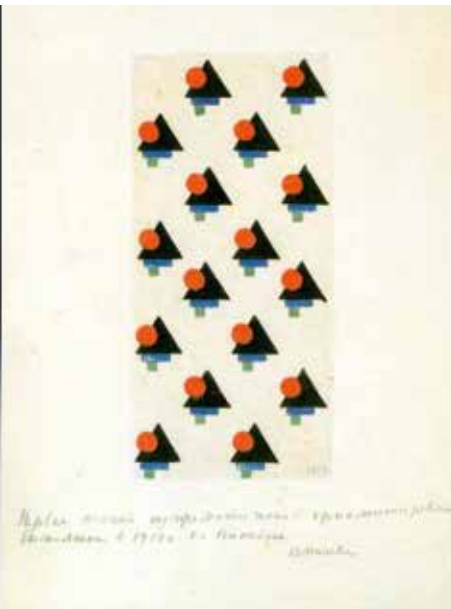
No more shows. No Suprematism. In the USSR, only social realism was possible.

The artist died in 1935.



Left: Tea set of the Leningrad Porcelain Factory, created according to the sketches of Malevich. 1922.

Right: A pattern of fabric with a drawing by Malevich. 1919





Jubilee Medal "300 Years of the Russian Academy of Sciences"

300th ANNIVERSARY OF THE RUSSIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

The history of the Russian Academy began on 26th January (8th February) 1724 with the decree of Peter the Great on the establishment of the Academy of Sciences and Arts in St Petersburg. Its main goals were to conduct research in various fields of science and to train young scientists.

Initially, the St Petersburg Academy of Sciences was situated in the house of Baron Peter Shafirov on Petrogradsky Island and in the neighbouring buildings – the former house of

Count Zotov and the house of Prince Gagarin – in 1728 moving to the new building of the Kunstkamera on Vasilyevsky Island.

The Academy contained a library, the Kunstkamera, an astronomical observatory, a botanical garden, a physical office, a chemical laboratory (founded by M. V. Lomonosov in 1748), an anatomical theatre, art workshops and a printing house.

In May 1917 the Academy was renamed the Russian Academy of Sciences, and in 1925 – the Academy of Sciences (AS) of the USSR. In 1934, the USSR Academy of Sciences and several other scientific institutions were transferred from Leningrad to Moscow. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union it became known again as the Russian Academy of Sciences.

In our days the Academy continues to play an important role in the development of science and education in Russia.

THE 80th ANNIVERSARY OF THE LIFTING OF THE SIEGE OF LENINGRAD



Medal "For the Defence of Leningrad"

On 27th January 1944 as a result of the Leningrad-Novgorod Strategic Offensive the German Nazi troops near Leningrad were defeated and the 872-day siege was finally lifted (earlier the siege ring was broken on 18th January 1943).

According to various sources, between 600 000 and 1.5 million people died over the period of the siege. Huge damage was done to historic buildings and monuments of Leningrad. Thanks to the herculean efforts of Leningrad residents much was saved: from the first days of the war valuable museum exhibits began to be urgently evacuated from the city; monuments and memorials were buried in the ground; and effective measures were taken to camouflage historic buildings.

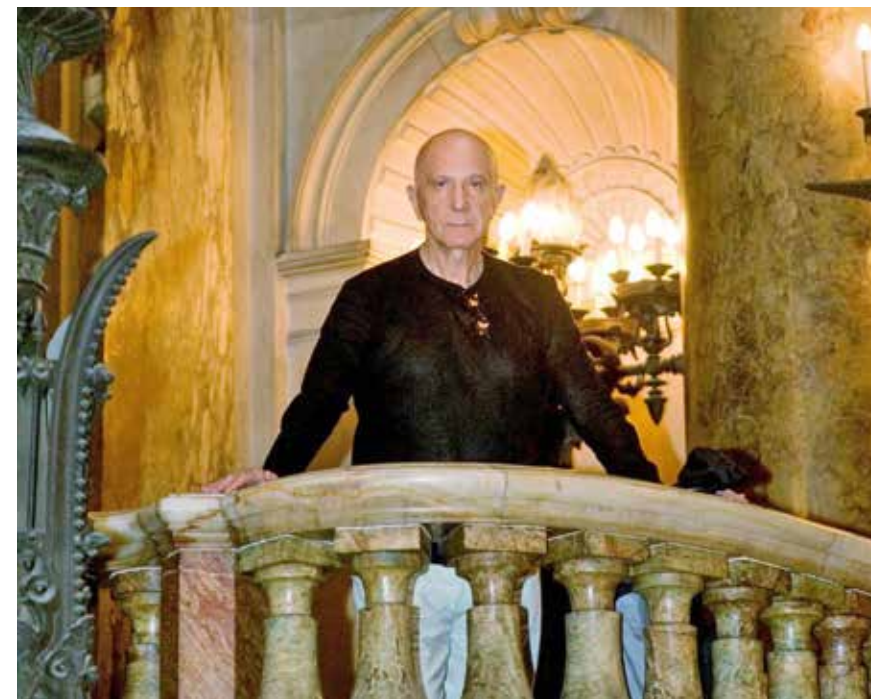
In May 1945 Leningrad, along with Stalingrad, Sevastopol and Odessa was named a hero city.

THE 100th ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTH OF ROLAND PETIT

The Bakhrushin Theatre Museum presents a photo exhibition in Paris dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the birth of one of the greatest choreographers of the 20th century, Roland Petit.

The photo exhibition will be held at the Russian Orthodox Spiritual and Cultural Centre in February and March 2024. It includes the photographs made by one of the best ballet photographers, Mikhail Logvinov.

Roland Petit is the author of more than 100 ballets and concerted items. He worked a lot with Russian artists. For example, he staged *The Queen*



Roland Petit

Photo: Mikhail Logvinov

of Spades for Mikhail Baryshnikov to the music of the opera of the same name, and for Maya Plisetskaya a two-act ballet *The Death of the Rose*. In 2001, the Bolshoi Theatre presented a new ballet *The Queen of Spades* to the music of Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony, where the main roles were performed by Nikolai Tsiskaridze, Ilze Liepa, Svetlana Lunkina and Georgy Geraskin.

CHAGALL'S MASTERPIECE AT THE GRAND OPERA

Descendants of the French artist Jules-Eugene Lenepveu demand the removal of the fresco by Marc Chagall on the painted ceiling under the dome of the Paris Opera, as it conceals the original painting by Lenepveu, made in 1875 in the Classical style of the nineteenth century.



removable polymer panels, which means that Lenepveu's descendants can hope for a positive outcome.

The composition of the work is symbolically divided into five sections (green, blue, yellow, red and white) with scenes from classical productions that brought fame to the stage of the Paris Opera: Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake*, Berlioz's *Romeo and Juliet*, Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov* and others. Chagall also placed images of the Eiffel Tower, the Arc de Triomphe and even the Grand Opera building on the ceiling.

At first, Chagall's work, executed in the Avant-Garde style, was criticised severely because it contrasted sharply with the classical interior of the Paris Opera. However, over time Chagall's ceiling became world-famous and an integral part of the Grand Opera.

"The removal of Chagall's masterpiece, which is a symbol of the Grand Opera, will raise serious questions and is not in our plans," said Martin Ajdari, Deputy Director of the Paris Opera.

VALENTINE'S DAY

Valentine's Day is celebrated annually on February 14th. It originated as a Christian feast day honouring a martyr named Valentine and through later folk traditions, it has also become a significant cultural, religious, and commercial celebration of romance and love in many regions of the world.

There are several martyrdom stories associated with various Saint Valentines connected to February 14, including an account of the imprisonment of Saint Valentine of Rome for ministering to Christians persecuted under the Roman Empire in the third century. According to an early tradition, Saint Valentine restored sight to the blind daughter of his jailer. Numerous later additions to the legend have better related it to the theme of love: tradition maintains that Saint Valentine performed weddings for Christian soldiers who were forbidden to marry by the Roman emperor; an 18th-century embellishment to the legend claims he wrote the jailer's daughter a letter signed "Your Valentine" as a farewell before his execution.

The 8th-century Gelasian Sacramentary recorded the celebration of the Feast of Saint Valentine on February 14. The day became associated with romantic love in the 14th and 15th centuries when notions of courtly love flourished, apparently by association with the "lovebirds" of early spring.

In 18th-century England, it grew into an opportunity for couples to express their love for each other by presenting flowers, offering confectionery, and sending greeting cards (known as "valentines").



Photo: Tyler Nix / unsplash

Valentine's Day symbols that are used today include the heart-shaped outline, doves, and the figure of the winged Cupid. In the 19th century, handmade cards gave way to mass-produced greetings. In Italy, Saint Valentine's keys are given to lovers as a romantic symbol and an invitation to unlock the giver's heart.



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