

## AQUARIUM

### **Exhibition of Fyodor Morozov's paintings and drawings.**

*Wilier is the softest and weakest  
element in the world, but it is  
invincible in overcoming the firm  
and the strong, and in tins respect  
it is without rival.*

*Lao Tzu*

The entire history of art can be reduced to the two basic developmental trends. The first is the realization of an idea) truth. This trend of classical aesthetics, with its learning and observation of nature, is a necessary precondition for attainment of the top of artistic mastery. The second trend is the embodiment of eternity as a moment, and of space — as a boundless void. This is the trend of ancient Chinese aesthetics. It requires self-exploration, concentration and wisdom on the part of the artist, which allows him to perceive the world and not to act, but rather to create.

When starting his work, any artist — famous or unknown, professional or amateur -tasks himself to reproduce, in the first case, the real, visible world, and in the second case, the other kind of world, which is impalpable and divine.

The contradictory nature of 20th century art lies in the fact that both Western and Eastern artists tried to study, comprehend and reconcile these two trends through mingling them in a single creative work. This is also true of the Primorsky region artists and of Fyodor Morozov in particular. The search for knowledge is the key in defining his career as an artist. Since graduating in 1972 from the Vladivostok School of Arts (the same School from which Gustavo Courbet graduated) Fyodor Morozov has been searching for, and -- what is important — found the sources of information about styles and tendencies of the modern European painting; he studies them and incorporates them into his own work, without copying them.

Most likely the incentive for him to do so was a clear comprehension of the fact that it was impossible, inconceivable and simply boring to create realistically verisimilar portraits of builders of communism in a linear perspective of their everyday life. In his works, Fyodor has used casually received, scant pieces of information about modernism and in the result, as he himself admits; he got "a mixture of impressionism, neoimpressionism and primitivism in order to achieve some dynamism". Although Fyodor's big work *To the Frontier guards of Khasan*, painted in the expressionist tradition, was later destroyed by the author, it had some very important elements, and Fyodor still remembers it and values it highly.

What distinguishes Fyodor Morozov as a personality is that in using different styles and methods in his works, his primary interest is not the technical side of methodology, but rather its ideological underpinnings. His passion for Cezanne and Matisse

led him to discover and adopt the ancient Chinese philosophy, and through it the phenomenon of the ancient Chinese painting.

The majority of the exhibited works are products of this discovery. Therefore, we feel the need to explain some basic categories and concepts of the classical Chinese philosophy, in particular Taoism. Without the latter it would be difficult to understand the laws created by the artist and to evaluate his paintings.

Tao means "a path" and it is one of the most common and widely known concepts of Chinese classical philosophy. One of the forms of expressing Tao is the dragon, where Tao is incarnated not only in the head, the body and the tail of the dragon, but also in the white, untouched parts of the scroll. The so called "White Dragon" white pieces of canvas without drawings was revered as the highest form of the dragon's embodiment. "The White Dragon" — the untouched whiteness of the sheet — is the apex of abstraction and imagination, because the whiteness is considered ideal. If an artist decides to break it with his touch, he should create a new harmony, one of the countless possible, already incorporated in the "White Dragon".

The embodiment of harmony is impossible without the Tzu-rhythmic motion, a necessary attribute of the Tao spirit. This motion is the result of the struggle between opposing forces: the Yin (female) and the Yang (male). The interaction of these forces creates the primary elements from which all things in the real world are formed.

Now let's address the works of *the Aquarium* collection. According to European standards they are almost purely abstract, though separate figures — a fish, a bird — appear here and there. In accordance with the Chinese tradition, even a simple line presents a conventional sign on the plane of elements of objective reality. And if there appears a spot of paint on the untouched surface, it means the harmony is broken by one of the basic forces — Yin or Yang. The artist should balance it. As a result we get two opposites which produce a movement, a Tzu-pulsation, etc. Morozov says that sometimes, while working on such paintings, he finds himself in a situation where he does not know what his next step will be. He then puts the canvas aside for some time, and later it may happen that a new, absolutely unexpected inspiration strikes him.

The *Aquarium* collection has its own nuances. Water is another favorite symbol of Tao. It is the element which fills the space created by the artist. This is where the association with an aquarium came from. Real world subjects can also exist in such a substance; sometimes they sustain the harmony, and sometimes they break it.

Morozov does not completely dismiss the figurative painting. Moreover, the intellectual effort it takes to create abstract compositions only strengthens his mastership and reinforces his belief that the chosen technique is correct.

Among the post-War European artistic trends, Fyodor Morozov is most impressed by the French Miserabilism (from a French

word *miserable* which means poor, unhappy, rejected). The name of the trend reflects the dramatic expression and the picturesque asceticism of its followers: Bernard Buffet, Jean Karsou, Alberto Giacometti. However, what is most important for Morozov in their works is their aspiration to "split" the space, to enter the other world, creating it by drawing a line and adding colour. Breaking into a plane of canvas, a Miserabilist's line defines the plane and creates the necessary depth.

The influence of B. Buffet is seen in Morozov's works such as *A Red Room*, *A portrait of Gorodny*, *Zhenechka*. He uses the same methods of spatial construction. However, the picturesque asceticism of Miserebilists is not for him: being a wonderful colorist, he feels uncomfortable confined to the asceticism of the French painters.

In his recent figurative compositions, Morozov appears as a real master. He makes use of all the skills, knowledge, and experience that he attained during his lifelong selfless commitment to art. In such works as *Herod's Dream*, *The way to the Temple*, *The Crossroads*, *Aggressor from the South*, and *A Portrait of Marina*, the audience can recognize real Vladivostok landscapes, architectural constructions, and ships, and together with them, in the other space, one can see symbolic and allegoric figures, big and small colour spots and planes, which combine to something mysterious. Sometimes to exorcise an image haunting him, but created by another artist, Morozov integrates it into his composition, always mentioning the name of the author, like in *Delvo City*, *Big Primarye Nude* (allusion to Matisse).

Morozov's creative search fully corresponds to the postulate: "When you want to avoid vulgarity, then there is no other way but to study. The spirit of knowledge will rule, and the spirit of vulgarity will disappear."

*Natalia Lerdanskaya*