

RUSSIAN MAECENAS

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With
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pages

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PLANET / p. 38*

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the Peace *p. 50*



*Fair Government
Strong Business
Prosperous Citizens*

12+

RUSSIAN MAECENAS

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On covers:

The Kawarga-Skete, an art object in the Podporozhsky District
of the Leningrad Region. Photo: Timur Turgunov

Fragment of a poster for an individual exhibition by Dmitry Kaminker
in the Marble Palace of the Russian Museum.

Welcome!

Recruitment of Ambassadors

Augustin Čisár, the former Consul-General of Slovakia
in St. Petersburg, has received an offer from Evgeny
Pankevich, Head of the Tourist Development Committee,
to become an ambassador of St. Petersburg. It is largely
thanks to Mr. Čisár that the 'Monument to Pushkin'
competition for performers of Russian poetry and prose has
been held in the Slovakian town of Lučenec for five years
running. There are now twenty ambassadors representing
the Northern Capital internationally.

That is good news and very timely. The subject of
'tourist ambassadors' was also raised at the St. Petersburg
International Cultural Forum. Speaking at the conference
'Inclusion of Objects of Cultural and Natural Heritage
in World Tourist Routes', Andrey Ermak, Minister of
Culture and Tourism for the Kaliningrad Region, named all
the ambassadors of his region, starting with Peter the Great.

I asked him why he had not included Alexander I
and Napoleon in that prestigious list — they signed the
celebrated Treaty of Tilsit in 1807, spending a total of 56
days in Tilsit (now Sovetsk in the Kaliningrad Region).
It was there, at the same time, that the first European
beauty, Queen Louise, attempted to mitigate the fate of



Prussia... The history of this small town on the Neman
features cultural figures from Russia, Germany, Lithuania...

I visited Sovetsk in May this year and was struck by
the lamentable state of many of the historic buildings.
I wrote about this to Mikhail Shvydkoy, the Russian
President's Special Representative for International Cultural
Cooperation, who forwarded my letter to the Governor of
Kaliningrad Region. A reply arrived in the autumn, signed
by the Deputy Chairman of the Regional Government:
it assured me that work was under way to conserve the
buildings and adapt them to modern requirements and that
a list of them had been compiled for inclusion in the plan for
2020 with support from the regional and local budgets.

Minister Andrey Ermak answered my question in the
sense that Kaliningrad was visibly improving and becoming
a sought-after destination and it would soon be the turn of
Sovetsk. The sooner the better, otherwise these relics will
collapse and no ambassadors will be able to help.

*Arkady Sosnov,
Editor-in-Chief
of Russian Maecenas*



ENTHUSIASTS

'EVERYTHING HERE WILL OUTLIVE ME...'

The story of a woman who has managed to preserve the amazing history of the village of Komarovo / p. 4

EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

IVAN-TSAREVICH ON SAKHALIN

An oil and gas company has celebrated its 25th anniversary with an unusual cultural project / p. 12



YOUR LANGUAGE IS OUR FRIEND

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DROWNING IS PROHIBITED!

Professional lifeguards are teaching children the rules of behaviour in water / p. 20

PHILANTHROPISTS

A HERMITAGE INCLUSIVE

The museum is helping people with development difficulties to appreciate art / p. 24



A HUNDRED SHADES OF THANK YOU

On Maecenas Day we learn to thank and be grateful / p. 31





TERRITORY OF SUCCESS

HIS OWN LITTLE PIECE OF THE PLANET

A St. Petersburg businessman is creating
a park of contemporary sculpture in the east
of the Leningrad Region / p. 38

HERITAGE

LET US ENJOY THE PEACE

The restoration of the Chinese Palace
at Oranienbaum is continuing with the support
of Gazprom and Gazprom Transgaz
St. Petersburg / p. 50



**‘A good teacher knows that there is no class
in which there are no children with dyslexia.
If we label these children as lazy or stupid,
we will lose any number of Leonardos,
Einsteins and Mozarts.’**

*Tatiana CHERNIGOVSKAYA,
Professor of the St. Petersburg State University,
Honoured Scientist of Russia / p. 27*

‘Everything here will outlive me...’

THE STORY OF A WOMAN WHO HAS MANAGED TO PRESERVE THE AMAZING HISTORY OF THE VILLAGE OF KOMAROVO

Sasha KRUGOSVETOV. Photos: Timur Turgunov



Nikolay Cherkasov's coffee table.

In the Strugatsky brothers' book *The Doomed City* the characters ponder on what remains on the ash heap of history after civilizations have come and gone. And they answer their own question: an invisible temple of culture. Breathing life into this temple is unthinkable without architects, whose daily labour cements together its invaluable parts, making the temple visible to you and me.

The municipal museum in the village of Komarovo is just such a handmade temple and its architect for the last twenty years has been Irina Snegovaya, who, together with a group of fellow-enthusiasts, is collecting evidence bit by bit of the history of a village that is without doubt a unique phenomenon of St. Petersburg and Russian culture.

‘I started coming to Komarovo frequently in 1999 when I resigned from the Literary Museum at Pushkin House’, says Irina. ‘I had to stay at the dacha with my sick mother-in-law and I joined

the library to find out about the village's history. I was sure that somebody must already have written about Komarovo, but it turned out that nobody had, so the subject just dropped into my lap. It was obvious that there was a lot of culture here from the Silver Age and from the Soviet period, illuminated by many outstanding names. I never imagined, of course, the whole volume of this heritage, but my aim was to study it, collect reminiscences and write articles, perhaps even a book. Komarovo became for me a wonderful unexplored territory’.

Indeed, the village of Kellomäki (now Komarovo), up to the present day (from 1991), which still awaits its historians, has lived through three periods: the Silver Age, the Finnish period and Soviet times. The village originated as a result of the introduction in 1870 of the railway connecting the Grand Duchy of Finland with St. Petersburg.

Enthusiasts

The Karelian Isthmus was a popular area for building dachas. Representatives of the arts settled here in search of new impressions, influenced by the fashionable Scandinavian writers of the time — Strindberg, Hamsun and Ibsen. The cool melancholy of the landscapes inspired them to fantasize and led them to build dachas that were like fairytale castles.

The symbolists went to the shore of the gulf in order to feel like characters in Böcklin's landscapes or Munch's paintings. Those who came here wished, according to Mandelstam, 'to finish thinking what they could not finish thinking in St. Petersburg'. A description of the Silver Age — brilliant but disastrous, was given by Anna Akhmatova in her *Poem without a Hero*, a poem of repentance of the Russian intelligentsia. Later, from 1955 to 1966, Akhmatova lived in her own dacha in Komarovo, the 'Booth', and always linked memories of herself with the village:

*Everything here will outlive me,
Even the houses of the stare
And this air I breathe, the spring air,
Ending its flight across the sea.*

After Finland gained its independence on 6 December 1917, the local authorities opened a refuge in the village for Russians fleeing the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. According to eyewitness accounts, Kellomäki remained a mainly Russian settlement and life there retained all the flavour of pre-revolutionary Russia, though the Russian street names were changed and the Finns actively bought up ownerless and cheap dachas — modernist wooden masterpieces. Cultural life continued to thrive in the village: there were schools, theatres and subscriptions to Russian newspapers and magazines, and Russian opposition parties held meetings there. Nevertheless, there was an atmosphere of exodus, nostalgia for the lost motherland and a presentiment of inevitable fateful events.



In 1940, when the Winter War ended, Komarovo and its adjoining territories became part of the Soviet Union. In the period from 1955 to 1965 there was a House of Creativity for writers, theatrical figures, composers, architects, journalists and film-makers, dachas of the Literary Foundation and the Theatrical Society and an Academic Village; prominent cultural figures were allotted their own plots of land to build on... A densely populated cultural reserve formed in the small area beside the sea between Repino and Zeleznogorsk. According to Daniil Granin, it served as a club for conversation and exchange of ideas for a long time during the Soviet period. Irina Snegovaya adds: for those to whom there was 'need to know because of their office' it was also a barometer of moods among the intelligentsia.

There were several dominant influences in Komarovo around whom creative life revolved. They included Anna Akhmatova and

The inhabitants of Komarovo featured in the museum include:

— poets Anna Akhmatova, Joseph Brodsky, Olga Bergholz and Alexander Prokofiev;
— writers Daniil Granin, Fyodor Abramov, Olga Forsh, Yuri German, Vera Panova, Sergey Dovlatov, Leonid Panteleev, Viktor Konetsky, Ivan Efremov and the Strugatsky brothers;
— theatre and cinema figures Georgy Tovstonogov, Innokenty Smoktunovsky, Evgeny Lebedev, Alexander Volodin, Evgeny Schwartz, D.AI, the Boyarsky clan, Galina Ulanova, Elizaveta Time, Nikolay Akimov, Iosif Heifitz, Nadezhda Kosheverova, Andrey Moskvina, Grigory Kozintsev and Friedrich Ermler;
— composers and musicians Dmitry Shostakovich, Oleg Karavaychuk, Boris Klyuzner, Vasily Solovyov-Sedoy, Sergey Kuryokhin;
— artists Natan Altman, Alexander Samokhvalov, Leonid Kiparisov and many others.

Komarovo. Academician Ivan Pavlov at the gate of Chizhov's dacha.

Gavriil Baranovsky's 'Harp Castle' dacha.

In 1935 Boris Zaitsev, a writer who was a friend of Bunin and Shmelyov, came to Kellomäki for two months to visit a relative of his wife. He was well received by the Russian diaspora and saw his journey as a meeting with a Russia that he had lost and continued to pine for.

The history of the merchant Ivan Chizhov's estate, which he designed in 1913 with a cascade of ponds, a fountain and other embellishments, is also of interest. In April 1917 he sold his dacha to Emil Reno, but Reno left for Paris shortly afterwards, leaving the estate to his sister-in-law Vanda Oreshnikova. The estate became a guesthouse. In the 1920s Ivan Pavlov, Russia's first Nobel Prize winner, came to the guesthouse and liked the manageress and her daughters. He was looking for a bride for his son Vladimir and summoned him to come to the guesthouse — shortly afterwards Vladimir married the youngest daughter Tatiana. The descendants of the Pavlov family still live in the village and take an active part in its cultural life.

The St. Petersburg writer and poet Natalya Galkina, a participant in Boris Strugatsky's seminar, inspired by the account of the academician's granddaughter of the romantic meeting of her parents in Kellomäki, wrote the novel 'Villa Reno', full of Komarovo legends, which became a cult publication for the village. The estate's wooden buildings have burned down on a number of occasions. Today one of them has been rebuilt from scratch. The well-maintained slope, the ponds and cascades are now part of the 'Komarovo Bank' reserve, which is included in the route of the guided tours that Irina Snegovaya organizes for visitors to the museum.

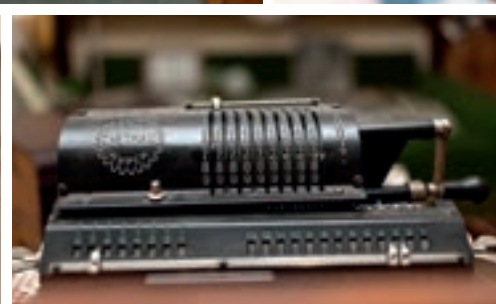


her 'magical choir' — Joseph Brodsky, Anatoly Naiman, Evgeny Rein and Dmitry Bobyshev. There was also Nikolay Cherkasov, whose guests at his dacha included Dmitry Shostakovich, Evgeny Mravinsky, Evgeny Schwartz, Yury German and Arkady Raikin. However, it would be incorrect to single anybody out. People whose names are inscribed in the history of Russian culture lived here, visited friends, chatted, argued and worked here, and in this special creative environment acknowledged masters acquired young followers. The Strugatsky brothers thought up their famous 'zone' for their *Picnic by the Roadside* in Komarovo and unwittingly created the mythology of the village.

Until recently, you might have met the wise Daniil Granin on the road to Schuchye Ozero (Pike Lake), or the brilliant musician with exotic manners Oleg Karavaychuk in Ozeraya Street. He always went walking alone. If you went up to him and said hello, he would reply 'Leave me alone!' 'Komarovo is a place which a miracle has given great possibilities. Harmony created by nature is always above harmony created by man' — those are Karavaychuk's words.

History inevitably passes, along with people and their belongings, words and deeds, household objects and spiritual legacy. It requires an extraordinary person to preserve that history — someone who has been preparing for that mission for all their previous life. And that person turned out to be a woman who ended up in Komarovo by the will of His Majesty Chance.

Irina Snegovaya suggested to Elena Tsvetkova, the head of the local library, that she (Snegovaya) take on the preservation and systemization of the village's material and spiritual heritage. Tsvetkova introduced her to long-term residents of Komarovo and took her to meet Daniil Granin, who named the writers to whom she should apply. Irina drew up a plan and approved it herself (she had no superiors), purchased a Dictaphone and started recording interviews. She sought out memoirs in the Public Library, copied them, made copies of photographs, bought books and postcards. She then began to conduct thematic guided tours including visits to Akhmatova's 'Booth', the cemetery, 'Villa Reno', the 'Harp Castle' viewing platform...





Daniil Granin's desk.

The Nikolay Cherkasov corner.

Joseph Brodsky's poem about Komarovo
'Sandy hills, overgrown with pines...'



People interested in the history of the village began coming to the library. The first article about the Komarovo necropolis was written as long ago as the 1990s by Alexander Kobak. Local historian Evgeny Balashov brought to the library a photocopy of a map of the village in 1913 by the artist Ivan Vladimirov. Vladimir Gumenikov, head of the village's municipal authority, wrote a note about the map and later art historian Natalya Batorevich, Vladimirov's granddaughter, published a book about the artist and his life in the village. The two enthusiastic women, Irina Snegovaya and Elena Tsvetkova, were assisted greatly by the architect Rafael Dayanov, who filmed a huge amount of material about the modernist dachas in the village, doing all he could to maintain their interest in the subject and becoming the prime mover in the publication of the first collection of articles about the history of Komarovo in 2003. The collection included a short review by Irina Snegovaya about the culture of the village and its inhabitants.

'The collection appealed to the historian Rafail Ganelin, and that gave me strength', says Snegovaya. 'Daniil Granin also praised me and gave me several interviews that were later included in the



second collection — *Kellomäki-Komarovo*. The logical next step was to set up a museum. At the end of 2004, without any request on my part, I suppose on the initiative of Daniil Granin, I was offered a room on the ground floor of the Municipal Council building in Komarovo. I remember an absolutely empty room — Elena Tsvetkova and I spread out photographs, Writers' Union posters, memoirs etc. on the floor. The then head of the Resort District Viktor Borisov came, looked and approved of our initiative. Television (in the person of Zinaida Kurbatova, granddaughter of Academician Likhachev), began to show an interest in the materials of the future museum and then, out of the blue, Nina Popova, Director of the Anna Akhmatova Museum in Fontanny Dom, invited us to stage a presentation of our first collection of articles, and we had the great opportunity of exhibiting Akhmatova's Oxford gown in our room for two months...'

Then came a series of amazing coincidences. Artists from the Akhmatova Museum came to design the showcases. It then became known that Nikolay Cherkasov's son Andrey was selling his father's dacha. Irina Snegovaya was invited to arrange items from

Enthusiasts

the drawing-room just as they would have been in Cherkasov's time. The items were brought and arranged by a window. The artists helped to hang cornices and blinds, and the result was a memorial corner. Shortly afterwards Vera Zilitinkevich, another of Dmitry Likhachev's granddaughter, came to Komarovo to sell his dacha flat in the 'Academician' cooperative. Irina Snegovaya and Elena Tsvetkova were offered an armchair, bookshelves, photographs and paintings from the dacha — these formed a second memorial corner.

'Everything almost organized itself and the room became a museum,' continues Irina Snegovaya. 'I was the only curator of the space that still had to be given meaning and become habitable. The Kellomäki-Komarovo Museum opened on 29 April 2005, which coincided with Good Friday and my name day. All that remained was to treat what had happened as a mission that I had not sought but that had to be fulfilled.'

As soon as it opened, it was a special museum, if only because it could operate only for four months in the summer-autumn season. Then life stood still. By her own admission, it was important for Irina Snegovaya to understand, structure and explain the phenomenon of Komarovo to visitors, to include numerous facts into the conception of a narrative and help them to understand this historic-cultural phenomenon.

The now meaningful display began to be assembled in the following season of 2006. Visitors and enthusiasts (the aforementioned Elena Tsvetkova, Eduard Paygalik, Olga Sokolova, Boris Lavrenenko, Vladimir Romanovsky — the list goes on), discovered history for themselves, brought items of museum value and helped to design exhibitions.

'I could have just ordered Xerox copies of the photographs and laminated them,' admits Snegovaya, 'but computer graphics, superb easels with plexiglass for photographs and a great deal more became possible only thanks to my volunteer helpers. Zelenogorsk





...alongside Alexander Samokhvalov's Girl in a T-Shirt (the 'Soviet Venus') and photographs of the no less famous Girl with an Oar, a portrait of Olga Bergholz (the 'Soviet Gioconda') — a woman and a poet who had an incredibly tragic life.



Library gave us racks for the display. Daniil Granin's daughter Marina, not begrudging the time, took me to artists' studios, showing me examples of museum design. She also gave me her father's writing desk where he wrote his first works. And one day an unknown young woman came and simply donated money...'

That is how the display devoted to the history and culture of Komarovo took shape. The village is a unique spot on the map of Russia, combining the culture of the pre-revolutionary period and modern times, the traditions of the St. Petersburg and Leningrad style. Respect and praise are due to the volunteer helpers, but had it not been for Irina Snegovaya's selflessness and dedication, it is hardly likely that we would now be talking about the museum. And it was built not by public subscription but according to an original project. That is why the display includes, alongside Alexander Samokhvalov's *Girl in a T-Shirt* (the 'Soviet Venus') and photographs of the no less famous *Girl with an Oar*, a portrait of Olga Bergholz (the 'Soviet Gioconda') — a woman and a poet who had an incredibly tragic life.

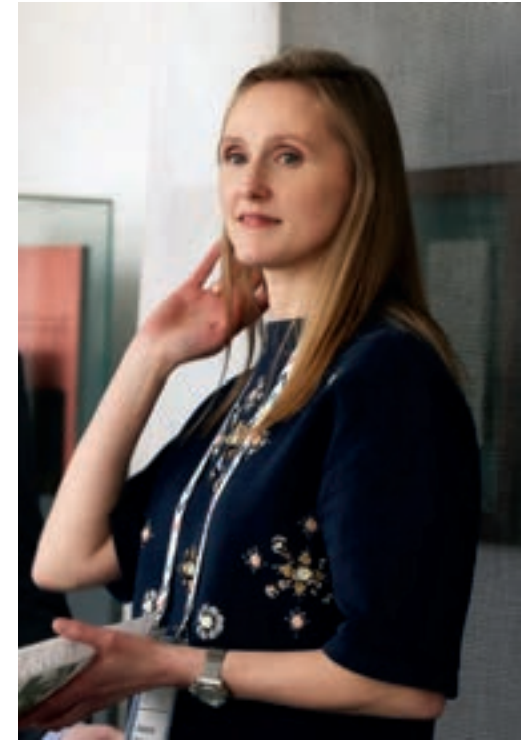


There are many such allusions, and it is not the aim of this publication to analyse them. This is about a different subject: this temple needs a stable legal foundation, the design of the display has to be completed and the museum is in need of proper financing.

And this is an opportune moment to introduce someone who is from a different generation but is also involved in the process of preserving the cultural heritage of St. Petersburg in museums. Natalya Kovalenko is an art historian, a graduate of the Repin Institute (Academy of Arts) who for nine years has headed another institution in the district — the Historical-Cultural Museum Complex in Razliv. She has time for literally everything: organizing exhibitions and lectures, quests and plays, master classes for children and their parents... The complex includes 2,500 exhibits from its main reserves and about 10,000 items (on a temporary basis) from the folk museum of the Voskov Tool Factory in Sestroretsk. The complex is expanding year by year with new branches and displays of various profiles, which in time will become the local history museum of the Resort District.

Natalya Kovalenko is inspired by the possibility of preserving the display created by Irina Snegovaya. Documents are in preparation prior to the official registration of the museum in Komarovo, which will become a branch of the district museum complex. Natalya Chechina, Head of the Resort District, shares this approach. However, Natalya Kovalenko considers her aim to be to preserve the concept and architecture of Irina Snegovaya's display.

Irina Snegovaya has agreed to provide items from her display to be transferred to the Russian Federation Museum Fund (a curator and an artist from the complex at Razliv have already started preparatory work on this). We will hope that the union of these two remarkable women, with the support of the Resort District Administration, will give our contemporaries and descendants a truly handmade temple — the cultural-historical museum in the village of Komarovo, which is now worthy of a separate building.



Natalya Kovalenko, Director of the Historical-Cultural Complex in Razliv, is prepared to take the cultural-historical museum in Komarovo under her wing.

Ivan-Tsarevich on Sakhalin

AN OIL AND GAS COMPANY HAS CELEBRATED ITS 25TH ANNIVERSARY WITH AN UNUSUAL CULTURAL PROJECT

Elena GURSHAL. Photos: *Sakhalin Energy* archive



Illustration for the Russian folk tale
Synko Filipko. Elena Polenova.

‘Mum, look at this...What cartoon is it from?’ pipes up a little five-year-old boy in the museum room. At that moment his mother is attempting to take a selfie against the background of one of Afanasiev’s splendid illustrations to Ershov’s fairytale *The Little Hump-backed Horse* and trying at the same time to find information about it on Google. Amusing scenes like this could be observed quite frequently during the two months of the exhibition *Fairytales in Works by Russian Artists* on the island of Sakhalin. For today’s children fairytale characters are kikori, spidermen or the fairies from Winx Club. Many of them have never heard of Baba Yaga, Ivan-Tsarevich, the Firebird... So it was all the more interesting for them and their parents to meet characters from real Russian fairytales. That was another, possibly unforeseen result of the exhibition that Sakhalin Energy, in collaboration with the Russian Museum and the Regional Art Museum, had given the island’s residents and visitors as a pre-

sent on the occasion of the company’s 25th anniversary. Visitors to the exhibition were able to enter a magical world created by the talent of great Russian artists: Benois, Kuindzhi, Shishkin, Roerich, Korovin, Bilibin, Savrasov...

‘The paintings from the second half of the 19th century and the early 20th century in our collection are a very “hot commodity”. They often travel all over the world, but we wanted to choose something special for Russia’s Far East. Some of the exhibits have been taken from our permanent displays — Shishkin’s *Mixed Forest*, for example,’ said Galina Krechina from the Russian Museum, the curator of the exhibition.

Every name in the exhibition was a legend. It included brilliant illustrations by Sergey Malyutin, who is considered to be the originator of the Russian matryoshka doll. A Japanese toy with a secret — the old man Fukuruma’s whole family was concealed inside

Effective Practice



Since 1994 Sakhalin Energy has successfully carried out one of the largest and technically most complex projects in the oil and gas world — Sakhalin-2. Based on advanced technologies and the experience of its shareholders (Gazprom, Shell, Mitsui and Mitsubishi), a firm base has been formed for the creation of a new sector for the production of liquefied natural gas in Russia. The company made a breakthrough when it established the country's first offshore ice-class oil and gas platforms, after building and operating Russia's first plant for the production of liquefied natural gas. The current share of Sakhalin liquefied natural gas in the Asia-Pacific Region is 4.8%, and on the world market — 3.6%.

him — was brought from the island of Honshu to the Mamontovs' family estate near Moscow. The nested doll intrigued Sergey Malyutin, who was a guest of the patron of the arts, and he decided to make something similar. That version is indirectly linked with Sakhalin, where there has always been keen interest in the culture of the Land of the Rising Sun.

The display featured a unique work by Alexander Benois. The *Alphabet in Pictures* he thought up for his son Kolya remains an unsurpassed example of book illustration. The artist decorated each letter with elegant compositions on fairytale themes. The page brought to Sakhalin depicted the most ambiguous character in Russian folklore — Baba Yaga. Who said exhibition organisers don't have a sense of humour?!

The illustrations were accompanied by theatrical scenery. One of the acknowledged masters of this craft, Konstantin Korovin, was the designer of over a hundred productions in the capital's theatres. The exhibition included his scenery for *The Snow Maiden*, the opera by the greatest storyteller among musicians Rimsky-Korsakov, and

also the costumes for the characters in the magical tale designed by Nikolay Roerich. And Roerich's scenery for Stravinsky's ballet *The Rite of Spring* were later included in a separate painting, which was also displayed on Sakhalin for the first time.

Landscapes by Alexey Savrasov, Ivan Shishkin, Arkhip Kuindzhi, Stanislav Zhukovsky, Konstantin Bogaevsky, Mikhail Klodt, Alexander Gine and other artists blended seamlessly into the context of the exhibition. Although not directly connected with Russian fairytales, these canvases helped to create a romantic setting in the museum room. It seemed that you could look beyond the paintings and see Ivan-Tsarevich, the Little Humpbacked Horse... or the sails in Konstantin Bogaevsky's *Ships. Evening Sun* changing their colour to scarlet.

Not surprisingly, the exhibition won the hearts of more than eight thousand visitors. For Sakhalin residents the opportunity to immerse themselves in a world where the talents of great artists, writers, poets and the people who have created the patterns of Russian folklore will not be without its consequences. It will facilitate the achievement of



'The particular value of the collaboration between the Russian Museum and Sakhalin Energy is that it helps us to interact with museums of the Sakhalin Region, which we never consider as provincial'.

Vladimir GUSEV,
Director of the Russian Museum



Thanks to the organisers, the exhibition turned into a real interactive museum project: over a hundred guided tours, master classes in batik, fulling of wool, the art of illustration, painting, concerts and documentary films about artists, cartoons and fairytale feature films, virtual lectures and walks through the Russian Museum, palaces and castles in St. Petersburg, a 'Kaschey the Immortal' quest and a 'Chudo-yudo Fish-Whale' performance. The fairytale theme was continued in two exhibitions of children's art, including the results of the competition 'We Draw a Fairytale and Bring it to the Museum'.

the key aims of the *Cultural Milieu* federal project, part of the national *Culture* project: it will create the conditions for strengthening civic identity based on the moral, spiritual and cultural values of peoples of Russia and for developing a creative environment in remote parts of the country. As for the paintings themselves, the very fact that they had travelled to Sakhalin had a partly magical significance. Kuindzhi's *Moonlit Night on the Dnepr*, Grand Prince Konstantin Romanov's favourite painting (his rooms in the Marble Palace in St. Petersburg are now part of the Russian Museum), once went on a round-the-world voyage, and now its 'fabulous' journey from the Russian Museum to Sakhalin enriched the history of the works included in the display.

'It was a difficult exhibition to stage, as we were trying to show various type of art — painting, graphic art, small sculptures and printed matter — in one room', said Anastasia Lvova, Chief Researcher of the Sakhalin Regional Art Museum. 'Our aims were educational as well as aesthetic: so that people would be prompted to buy books with illustrations by famous artists and give them to children as presents. We achieved this aim, in my opinion, and we were helped by our alliance with Sakhalin Energy and the Russian Museum.'

Sakhalin Energy is justifiably called the principal patron of Russian art on the island. The company established friendly relations with the Russian Museum five years ago in the course of the joint project *Five Centuries of Russian Art*, the highlight of the Year of Culture in the region. No such exhibition — more than forty works by 27 leading artists, from medieval Novgorod icon-painting to early 20th century Russian avant-garde from the capital's museums — had ever been staged east of the Urals, let alone as far away as Sakhalin. One of the reasons for this had been the over-scrupulous requirements for the conditions of maintaining cultural treasures in regional museums, so... try to provide them. The problem was solved with the aid of Sakhalin Energy: the company financed the purchase for the exhibition of special humidifiers and lighting



equipment, which remained in the museum after the exhibition and are still in use today.

A no less valuable legacy is the development of volunteering, also provided for in the national *Culture* project. When preparations were under way for the exhibition *Five Centuries of Russian Art*, it was already clear that the staff of the Sakhalin Regional Art Museum was unable to provide a guided tour service in full. It was decided to call for volunteers and train them. About thirty people, including employees of Sakhalin Energy, worked as tour guides at the exhibition. The island's museum has adopted this practice and now invites volunteers for its projects. One of the key aims of the national project is to increase attendance at cultural institutions by 15%. In fact, over 12,000 people visited *Five Centuries of Russian Art*, compared with an average attendance of 3,000.

Another example of the effectiveness of the tripartite alliance (the Russian Museum, a regional museum and Sakhalin Energy) was the exhibition *The World of the Nivkhs* at the Stroganov Palace in St. Petersburg in November 2016. It was a conceptually new and

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unusual venture for the Russian Museum, and for Sakhalin art it can be compared with coming out into society — something like a first ball. The display in St. Petersburg included exhibits from the Sakhalin Regional Art and Local History Museums, as well as from the municipal museums of Okha, Nogliki and Poronaïsk and the Givi Mantkava Gallery. For them working with the largest museum of Russian art was an honour and a prestigious event.

The small display (just 76 items) was able to find its niche in the culture of the Northern Capital and to interest those wishing to know more about their country and the peoples living in it. In the opinion of experts, it was an integral exhibition project combining original materials made using various techniques and with varying content by Nivkh and Sakhalin artists and their colleagues who had visited Sakhalin in various years. The project introduced visitors to the wonderful culture of the Nivkh people.

Evgenia Petrova, the Russian Museum's Deputy Director for Scientific Work, drew attention to the unobvious artistic links with the

exhibition in the Stroganov Palace. Firstly, at one time some of the exhibits from the nearby Institute of Peoples of the North had been transferred to the Russian Museum. Secondly, the Ludwig Museum in the Russian Museum in the Marble Palace features works by the currently very popular artist Grisha Bruskin, and the Okha Local History Museum has an early work by Bruskin entitled *A Nivkh Family*, painted jointly with Svetlana Bogatyr in 1975, though that title does not figure in the list of the master's works.

Among other works of merit in the Stroganov Palace were paintings by the first Nivkh artist Sergey Gurki, a graduate of the Graphic Art Faculty at the Herzen Russian State Pedagogical University (formerly the Leningrad Pedagogical Institute). Some of his works are in the Museum of the Arctic and Antarctic in St. Petersburg. According to his friend's recollections, the artist often repeated a line from a verse by his favourite poet Blok: '...and the impossible is possible'.

This optimistic statement is borne out by the three projects that the Sakhalin museums and the Russian Museum have been able to stage with the support of Sakhalin Energy.

'We are glad that our projects and even anniversaries are helping in the fostering a culture, in particular the museums, on the island that has become home to our company,' says Anna Lygina, Senior Specialist of the Social Performance Subdivision at Sakhalin Energy. 'Each project is not simply an exhibition but a whole range of events, including music, drama, performances and other events involving not only museums but also other cultural institutions. Just as importantly, by supporting initiatives like this we are helping the Sakhalin museums to become part of the national cultural context.'

The distance from St. Petersburg to Sakhalin is nearly 7,000 kilometres. You would think that the Russian Museum and the Far East oil and gas company are parallel worlds living by their own laws. But how many points of intersection they have! As Non-Euclidian geometry teaches, parallel lines can intersect.

Left:
'Five Centuries of Russian Art' was an outstanding event in the life of Sakhalin.

At the exhibition *The World of the Nivkhs* in the Russian Museum's Stroganov Palace.



Your Language is our Friend

SAKHALIN ENERGY IS CARING FOR THE SAFEGUARDING INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE REGION

Elena GURSHAL. Photos: *Sakhalin Energy* archive



There are nearly 400 million of them. They live in ninety countries on five continents. They are called first people, natives or aborigines. They are... indigenous peoples, representing over five thousand unique cultures and traditions inherited from their ancestors. According to expert prognoses, the languages of such peoples without their own statehood are doomed to die out in the next fifty years. The reasons are obvious: globalization, the development of electronic communications, assimilation... The United Nations has declared 2019 the International Year of Indigenous Languages. Is that just like trying to stop a waterfall with an umbrella or is it an SOS that should definitely be heeded?

Meanwhile, on the island of Sakhalin in the Far East of Russia, there is a company that has long been aware of the urgency of

the language problem. Sakhalin Energy is considered a pioneer in the development and application of practices for interacting with indigenous peoples (IP). The Sakhalin Region, which is home to about four thousand representatives of such peoples (Nivkh, Evenki, Uilta (Oroki) and Nanai), is included in the list of parts of Russia where languages are threatened with extinction. The well-known author Vladimir Sangi says he is now the only Nivkh writing in his native language.

So what can one company do to address what is a global problem? Judge for yourselves. For nearly fourteen years there has been a 'Sakhalin Indigenous Minorities Development Plan'. Those taking part in the project are the authorities (the Sakhalin Regional Government), business (Sakhalin Energy) and society

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(representatives of the public organisations of IP). The plan is based on the principle of 'free, prior and informed consent', enshrined in the 'UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples' in 2007, and later, in 2012, in the Performance standards of the International Finance Corporation (IFC), which serves as a reference point for the control of environmental and social risks. Sakhalin Energy has been following this principle since 2010, so in the business community it can be said that Sakhalin is ahead of the rest.

'A language is hard to master, but easier to lose,' says Elena Bibikova, a native Uilta speaker. 'Along with other elders, I am giving lessons in our native language and folk crafts, for adults as well as children. We do not want to reconcile ourselves to the fact that even among the indigenous community of the Sakhalin Region there are very few people who know their native language and we are trying to arouse interest in its study.'

Arousing interest is also the goal of Sakhalin Energy, taking into account the specific nature of the host region. This socially responsible company simply cannot ignore the vulnerable group represented by the indigenous peoples. This is part of the company's philosophy: it cannot act responsibly in some areas (business, labour and environment protection, and so on) and not in others. Of course, this cannot be called a crusade for the protection of the indigenous languages (the aims of an oil and gas company are on another plane, after all), but neither is it tilting at windmills. Everything the company is doing in this field can be seen, heard and read in the literature and textbooks in national languages published with its support. And there is a demand: in the current academic year seventy kindergarten children and 200 schoolchildren in Sakhalin are studying their native languages.

Here is a specific example. According to the most recent census, there are only 295 representatives of the Uilta people,



who live only on Sakhalin. The knowledge and folklore of these and other indigenous peoples, passed down from generation to generation by word of mouth, may be lost forever. For many years, Sakhalin Energy has been supporting linguistic research and the publication of materials for preserving the Uilta language. For example, an Oroki-Russian dictionary was published in 2003, and the first Uilta language primer was issued in 2008. Its logical continuation was an audio version, which appeared in time for the International Year of Indigenous Languages. According to Elena Bibikova, who read the text for the audio primer, it will help to preserve the language in sound.

Tales of Sakhalin, a book in Russian, has been published by the company as part of the Year of Languages. It is the first time

At the 'Native Speech' conference.

Global trends and the local experience of oil and gas companies engagement with indigenous minorities of the North was the subject for discussion at a special session of the Sakhalin Oil and Gas business conference. It was the first time in the 23 years of the conference that the subject had been discussed. This is a sure sign of a change in the relations between business and the ethno-cultural non-commercial sector in the country, which is fully in line with world trends. Along with production and financial statistics, the level of involvement of companies in positive social changes in the host regions is assessed.



The second IP 'Native Speech' conference for children and teenagers was held in Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk on the initiative of the Sakhalin Region Museums Association, the Regional Government and Sakhalin Energy.



Elena Bibikova makes a speech.

that traditional tales of the island's four principal ethnic groups have been included in a single volume. Experts on ethnic culture from Sakhalin and St. Petersburg — writers, researchers and folklorists — worked on the book for nearly two years. The text is interspersed with drawings by the Moscow artist Tatiana Barinova. To avoid inaccuracies and to convey the originality of the peoples, the compilers of the *Tales...* consulted experts and representatives of indigenous peoples of the North, checking every ethnographic detail: what ornament to trace on a robe, whether it was a man's or a woman's robe, whether the boat was a Nivkh or Uilta boat, a Uilta conical chum (tent) or the Nivkh summer dwelling the keraf. Thanks to their efforts, readers can now add to their knowledge of the way of life, beliefs and customs of the first residents of Sakhalin.

'These peoples still worship nature', explains Candidate of Philological Sciences Arkady Gashilov, Assistant Professor at the Institute of Peoples of the North at the Herzen State Pedagogical University. 'The old people say that everything around us has its own soul. Water and forest, earth and sky — people treat them as living beings. A tale is also a living thing, it flies like a bird.'

The company's gift was highly appreciated by the region's Ministry of Education. The book was distributed to libraries in districts of traditional indigenous people's residence, as well as to all the schools and kindergartens in the region.

The publication of books is far from being the company's only means of preserving the intangible cultural heritage of IP. Sakhalin Energy constantly has its finger on the pulse of what is happening in this sphere, taking an active part in social events and scientific conferences on the problems of indigenous ethnic groups.

The first in a number of significant events of the year on Sakhalin was an international symposium on the languages of indigenous peoples of the Far East of Russia. It was organised by the Association of Sakhalin Region Museums and the Sakhalin Island Chekhov Literary-Artistic Book Museum, with the support of the Sakhalin Regional Government's Directorate of Indigenous Peoples of the North and Sakhalin Energy. Linguists, experts and representatives of indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of Russia assembled not for abstract discussion but for an exchange of experience and, specifically, to discuss the action required to rescue and revert to languages thought to be doomed — there are examples of this around the world.

'The preservation of a native language is a heartache not only for indigenous peoples, but also for those who work beside and together with them', says Candidate of Pedagogic Sciences Na-

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talya Gonchar, Head of Information Support and Media Relations at Sakhalin Energy. 'As a philologist, I know that a native language carries the code of a nation, culture and identity. The death of a language leads to the disappearance of the people — it is only a matter of time. That is why each of us should do all we can to preserve the diversity of languages as the common heritage of civilization. Together we can achieve a great deal. Firstly, a language can be documented with the aid of textbooks, scientific publications, dictionaries and fiction. Secondly, it is essential to provide a impetus to its development.'

One such impetus was a joint project of Sakhalin Energy and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR). Part of the project involved the translation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples into the languages of the Sakhalin indigenous groups. An audio disc with recordings of the texts was also issued. This complex work was undertaken by indigenous languages specialists and professional translators, who were called upon to create a new vocabulary and completely new phrases, which can only stimulate the development of the languages. Vladimir Sangi, who translated the documents into Nivkh, said: 'thanks to the translation of these documents, the word "freedom" has been introduced into the Nivkh language'. We can add: the word 'hope' has entered the Evenk language.

'There is faith and love, but no hope — at least, there wasn't before!', says one of the participants in the project Nadezhda Bulatova, Candidate of Philological Sciences and leading researcher in the Russian Academy of Sciences Institute of Linguistic Studies.

Another significant event that coincided with the Year of Languages occurred in March: Sakhalin celebrated the fortieth anniversary of the Nivkh alphabet, created by Vladimir Sangi on

the basis of Cyrillic. To mark this important anniversary, Sakhalin Energy published the special calendar-alphabet *The Nivkh Year from A to Z* in four languages: Nivkh, Russian, English and Japanese. Vladimir Sangi, the founder of his written national language, oversaw the publication and wrote the Nivkh texts. The calendar was illustrated by the self-taught Evenk artist Vasily Solovyov.

At Sakhalin Energy they realize only too well that without involving the indigenous peoples themselves, the languages of the Sakhalin aborigines will not survive. It is critical that young people should start speaking their native languages, feel that it is prestigious and popular and that knowing your native language is cool! With this in view, the company, in conjunction with the Association of Sakhalin Region Museums and the Regional Government, has staged a conference for children entitled 'Native Speech'. It was held for the first time on Sakhalin and again in the run-up to the Year of Languages. The young participants were invited to translate an excerpt from Chekhov's *The Island of Sakhalin*, in which he describes the island's indigenous peoples, into their native language and to present their work in that language at the conference. Some of them had to start from scratch and take their first steps in the study of their native language. They were helped by their grandparents and indigenous languages specialists — a multilevel system of tutorship was organised in preparing for the conference. Everyone enjoyed the experience: the second such conference was held in the middle of November and it is planned to make it an annual event.

At the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, held at the UN Headquarters in New York this spring, Nina Veysalova, First Vice-President of the Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of Russia, addressed a precise challenge to the representatives of indigenous ethnic groups: to stop speaking about languages and to start speaking in languages. This is exactly what the humanitarian programmes of Sakhalin Energy are trying to do.



Writer Vladimir Sangi.

Tales of Sakhalin. The folklore of the island's four principal ethnic groups in one volume.



Drowning is Prohibited!

PROFESSIONAL LIFEGUARDS ARE TEACHING CHILDREN THE RULES OF BEHAVIOUR IN WATER

Sofya KALINICHENKO, student at Pushkin Leningrad State University. Photos: VOSVOD archive



‘...Let the grown-ups relax. / Don’t pester anyone. / Try to drown.’ That is the really ‘bad advice’ that Grigory Oster gave his young readers. His jokey poem about not bothering adults when they are sunbathing actually reveals an all too commonplace truth: parents’ thoughtless attitude to their children’s safety can lead to calamity.

Only in the first week of summer, the All-Russian Water Rescue Association (VOSVOD) for St. Petersburg and the Leningrad Region recorded two incidents of child deaths in the water. One was in the Luga District, where a six-year-old boy was swept away by the strong current of the River Luga. The other was in St. Petersburg’s 300th Anniversary Park, where there is a well-equipped beach. It was full of people that day, but nobody helped the drowning child.

Ivan Kochetov, Deputy Chairman of VOSVOD in the region, calls this ‘parents’ recklessness’:

‘People don’t see water as a danger. Many parents say they know everything that we try to warn them about. In that case, why are there so many tragedies?’

In the same 300th Anniversary Park, two weeks after the accident, Konstantin Bagin of VOSVOD rescued two children of pre-school age. Their parents had not noticed that the children had swum out a long way and had started to drown.

Every year at least forty children die in water in St. Petersburg and the Leningrad Region. The main reason for these tragedies are swimming in inappropriate places, not knowing the safety rules or disregarding them, inability to swim and absence of supervision. As a rule, they are the consequences of the lack of concern of parents, who, for some reason, are sure that if the water only comes up to their knees it poses no threat to their child. During 2019, a total of 180 people have died in water in St. Petersburg and the Leningrad Region.

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‘A lifeguard has only six minutes to help a drowning person. Even if the person is still alive after that time, their health will be seriously damaged. We always warn people: swim only in permitted places where our lifeguards are on duty’, says Ivan Kochetov. ‘If you see our lifeguards — athletic chaps in bright red T-shirts — on a beach, you know you are under reliable protection.’

The Water Rescue Association, abolished when the Soviets came to power, was revived in 1920s as a social organization that was, nevertheless, financed by the state. The structure suspended its activity between 1990 and 2003, when it was reborn as VOSVOD. Today its main income is from membership subscriptions and paid educational programmes. In VOSVOD regional centres, anybody can train as a lifeguard or diver or obtain a licence for water transport.

Since the organization’s revival, its principal mission has been accident prevention. They try to develop immunity to ‘recklessness’,

primarily among teenagers. Alexander Zuyev, head of the organization’s accident-rescue service, thinks their work with schoolchildren is much more effective than with their parents. For several years he has been teaching children the rules of behaviour in water and confirms: adults are more prepared to listen to their own child when he or she refuses to sit in a boat without a lifejacket. That is why it is so important to convince the child: your safety is in your hands. For this purpose, in 2005 VOSVOD introduced the programme ‘Education of Children in Swimming and Rescue in Water in St. Petersburg and the Leningrad Region’.

This long title conceals a simple and beneficial game of playing at lifeguards. Every child can feel like a hero for a while, capable of helping a drowning person. Lessons like these stick in children’s minds much quicker than the didactic advice of their elders. Rescuing dummies becomes a matter of honour!

Three basic rules for the children’s safety on water from VOSVOD.

First, the child should realize that water can be dangerous.

Second, there should always be an observer on the bank.

Third, it is essential to know: when someone is drowning, he does not shout or wave his arms as in films, but quietly slips underwater. If a child does not react to a call, emergency rescue measures must be taken.



The Water Rescue Association was founded in 1872. It was headed by the legendary seaman Admiral Konstantin Posiet. The Association's patron from its foundation until its forced liquidation in October 1918 was Grand Princess Maria Fyodorovna. Posiet achieved huge successes as Chairman of the Association: when the Association was founded, there were only three lifeboat stations in Russia, but 27 years later, largely through donations, there were 1,405. In that time, over 11,000 people were rescued by the efforts of the Association's members.

Gazprom Transgaz St. Petersburg has made a great contribution to this programme. With the company's support, VOSVOD holds competitions in swimming and rescue, creates textbooks and posters for schoolchildren, inspects places for swimming and purchases lifesaving equipment.

During the summer, lifeguards give lessons in children's health camps. Last season they were able to take in almost all the camps in St. Petersburg and the Leningrad Region. The lessons consist of two stages: theory and practice. Children are told in detail about safety in water, advised what to do if they see someone drowning and tested on what they have learned. The results are always commendable, though the majority of children admit that this knowledge and skill is new to them. After the lessons, the children are given instruction booklets, brochures and VOSVOD badges. A little corner in the camp is devoted to safety in water.

'The children are taught by professional lifeguards, including those of international class, who are able to make the lessons interesting', says Alexander Zuyev. 'The lessons are interactive: a team of instructors illustrates the talk with actions, then invites the children to try the lifesaving equipment and give first aid. It is essentially a dramatized show, and we do not forget the scenery — stage design and a selection of instructive material. We teach theory in the assembly hall, then head for the shore.'

Methods of swimming are taught in an exercise drill, then, if the weather is fine and the camp has an expanse of water, the children's knowledge is reinforced in shallow water. The instructors give master classes in rescue, one of them acting as the drowning person. The children see the process in action and an intriguing scene is played out in front of them. They worry desperately about the victim and the lifeguard. In future, convinced that water is no laughing matter, the children will certainly think about their own safety.



Children's summer camps are supposed to inspect the bottom of their ponds and lakes before the bathing season. However, they often economize on safety measures and by no means all the organizations, even those with licences for diving, carry them out as they should. When VOSVOD divers carry out inspections, they frequently find sharp objects, so the obligatory examination of ponds and lakes by the Association's specialists is not only a spectacle for the children but also a guarantee of their health.

During the winter, VOSVOD holds lessons in schools. The main subject is behaviour on ice, particularly important in St. Petersburg. In December it is planned to launch a programme of instruction in water safety equipment in all secondary educational establishments. At the moment the lessons take place during class hours, but in the new academic year 'Safety in the Water' is due to become part of the

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school curriculum. It is proposed that the lessons will be held two or three times a month by VOSVOD inspectors.

These lessons were usually given by class teachers without the necessary competences and the lesson was often merely a re-hash of the instruction booklet. Now a professional will be able to go into the subject in detail and answer the children's questions. This will be especially important before the winter and summer holidays — the times when children are most likely to be near ice or water. This is VOSVOD's first major educational project and it has approached it with all seriousness. The organization has developed the programme itself, with its own money, and all the teaching material will be supplied to schools free of charge. Text-books and presentations have already been prepared for teachers and exercise books with tasks for pupils. Gazprom Transgaz



St. Petersburg is also assisting the implementation of the programme.

According to VOSVOD statistics, the number of accidents in water has decreased in the last few years, but is it possible to be take pride in this positive trend when over a hundred people die in water every year in St. Petersburg and the Leningrad Region through stupidity and carelessness? This new prevention programme will be the cornerstone of lifesaving. It is quite difficult to assess its effectiveness, but judging by the feedback, schoolchildren really do accept the advice of VOSVOD instructors. The creators of the school programme are certain that this large-scale and all-embracing approach to children's safety will bear fruit: the interactive lessons in the form of a game will help children to learn the rules of behaviour in water like their multiplication tables. And they will definitely learn to treat the 'bad advice' of adults critically.



Professional lifeguards are teaching children vitally important skills.



A Hermitage Inclusive

THE MUSEUM IS HELPING PEOPLE WITH DEVELOPMENT DIFFICULTIES TO APPRECIATE ART
Vladimir PETROV, Sergey TEPLOV. Photos: Rodion Ataulin, Svetlana Ragina, Evgeny Sinyaver, Sergey Teplov



THE BLISS OF HEARING SIGN LANGUAGE

In the Hermitage you often come across visitors who are carrying on a lively conversation with the guide but are not inconveniencing anybody — the conversation is in sign language, of which our collocutors Alexandra Isaeva and Vera Shamaeva have a fine command. Our interviews had to be by correspondence, since Alexandra is hard of hearing and Vera is totally deaf.

‘The first guided tours for the deaf, translated into sign language, were held in 2015 at the Garage Museum of Contemporary Art in Moscow’, says Alexandra. ‘Similar projects began to be introduced in Russia’s cultural capital. The first tours with sign language translation were at the Russian Museum and the Street Art Museum in 2017. We also made a video guide in sign language for the

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Russian Museum and a video dictionary of street art terms. Ideally, though, it is essential that the deaf can talk to the guide without an intermediary’.

Before her first tours in May 2018, Alexandra had never seen herself as a museum guide. She is a teacher of the deaf by education and works in the development department of a large company, but in her spare time she organizes guided tours for the deaf and hard of hearing and gives open lectures on the subject of museum accessibility. It is necessary to choose a way of communicating with people with hearing problems, she explains, depending on the literacy of the audience. The majority of deaf people do not know Russian, which is like a foreign language to them. To exchange information they use Russian Sign Language, which is nothing like literary Russian. Another method is a calquing speech with gestures (calque), where what is spoken or written in Russian is repeated word for word with gestures. Calque is suitable only for literate people — others will not understand it or will misinterpret it. Alexandra Isaeva is fluent in both Russian Sign Language and calque.

That is probably why last year Ilya Ermolaev, Assistant to the General Director of the Hermitage, offered Alexandra employment as the museum’s first guide who could use Russian Sign Language without translation. And as her colleague he recommended Vera Shamaeva, who had attended training courses for deaf guides at the Hermitage and the Russian Museum. The girls accepted the offer, especially as they already knew each other (they had collaborated on the video guide for the Russian Museum).

The Hermitage stipulated that such guides should meet three criteria. First, a sufficient knowledge of Russia to be able to work with art experts’ texts. Second, a sufficient knowledge of sign language to be able to convey correctly to deaf visitors information from books and from the museum’s staff. In this case, the girls had to prepare tours of Ilya and Emilia Kabakov’s exhibition ‘Not



Everyone will be ‘Taken into the Future’ for the hard of hearing. Third, involvement in the world of the deaf, earning their trust.

At one time, Vera Shamaeva sincerely envied her friend who led guided tours in sign language at the Garage Museum. She has been interested in art since she was a child and regularly visits the Hermitage and other museums — it helps that her mother is an artist. She likes holding improvised tours of the city for friends, so it was all the more tempting to use this ability in the museum. As Chair of the Youth Committee of the St. Petersburg Division of the All-Russian Deaf Society, Vera travels around the country lecturing on the development of personal qualities, on the stereotypes and inner problems of the deaf community. Like Alexandra, she knows Russian Sign Language and calque.

Vera Shamaeva as an active listener at Alexandra Isaeva’s tour of Ilya and Emilia Kabakov’s exhibition.

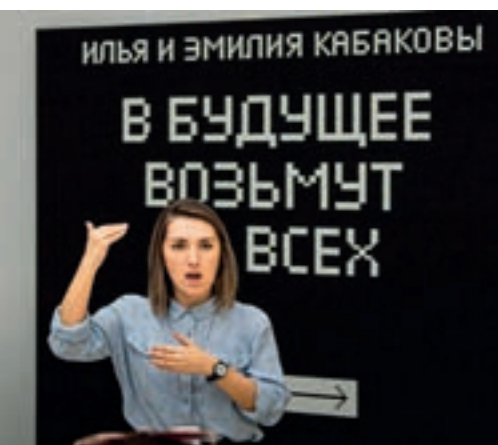
Page 24:
Alexandra Isaeva begins a guided tour.

As one of the first museums in Russia to be open to the public, the State Hermitage strives to be accessible to all categories of visitor.



Vera Shamaeva leads a guided tour of the Morozov brothers' collection.

Alexandra Isaeva became the first Hermitage guide to use Russian Sign Language without translation.



'I was one of the first on Sasha's tour of Ilya and Emilia Kabakov's exhibition in the Hermitage. Receiving information about Moscow conceptualism and elements of surrealism "à la Dali" was something extraordinary! It is not every day that a deaf person experiences such joy. You see and listen, as if you are watching a film,' says Vera. At the exhibition of Dutch masters from the Leiden collection and Ivan and Mikhail Morozov's collection, she and Alexandra were already taking turns to lead the tour. Their success exceeded expectations — it was even necessary to increase the planned number of tours from 20 to 30!

The tours are open to all-comers, who can enrol by e-mail for a particular date according to the schedule. Groups of ten to twelve people form very quickly. Separate tours are organized at the request of schools.

There are strict rules for the structure of tours in Russian Sign Language. For example, observance of chronological order in the talk. This is particularly important for the deaf, who otherwise lose

the thread of events. It was necessary to organize their own route for the tour of the Leiden collection, as the curator had arranged the collection according to a different principle. The route can also be adjusted depending on the lighting and the number of visitors — deaf visitors stand in a semicircle and the guide has to be clearly visible.

'We receive exclusively positive feedback,' says Alexandra. 'Visitors very much like the fact that the guide is speaking to them directly, not via an interpreter. Many of them admit that they have not been to the Hermitage for a long time — from 10 to 30 years, because nobody was able to explain clearly the meaning of the works. In the General Staff Building, almost everyone is there for the first time, discovering the museum space for themselves.'

As often happens, a good new undertaking encounters difficulties, and the girls are trying to overcome these together with the museums' administration. The first problem is connected with enrolment on guided tours — by no means all the deaf and hard of hearing know how to use e-mail, so they write directly to the guides on social networks, which is not very convenient. The second problem is more serious: because of demand, it is not easy to get on a tour — there are only two guides and the number of tours is limited. At the moment they are held only for temporary exhibitions in the Hermitage and the General Staff Building, but the energetic Alexandra and Vera also want to cover the permanent displays in the Winter Palace with general and thematic tours. Ilya Ermolaev assured us that this will soon be possible.

DYSLEXIA IS NOT A PROBLEM!

The State Hermitage took part in World Dyslexia Awareness Week, which took place in Russia for the first time from 5 to 12 October 2019. Dyslexia, dysgraphia and dyscalculia are specific defects of reading, writing and calculation. Dyslexics interpret information in a particular way: they often see a text as just a group of let-

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ters placed one after the other or mix up the placing of the letters. At a meeting on TASS before the Week, Hermitage General Director Mikhail Piotrovsky remarked:

‘All projects connected with particular trends that unexpectedly reveal people’s differences enable us to find new ways for the museum to communicate with an unconventional audience.’

Honoured Scientist of Russia Tatiana Chernigovskaya, a researcher in neuroscience and psycholinguistics, on the support of people with dyslexia and other learning difficulties:

‘A good teacher knows that there is no class in which there are no children with dyslexia. If we label these children as lazy or stupid, we will lose any number of Leonardos, Einsteins and Mozarts.’

Speakers from Moscow entered into a dialogue with St. Petersburg colleagues by TV link. Maria Piotrovskaya, founder of the Association of Parents and Children with Dyslexia, spoke about the association’s aims. Its mission is to give children with dyslexia the opportunity to receive quality education and realize their poten-

tial. This largely depends on teachers, and a 72-hour online course to improve their qualifications has been designed. A unified method of diagnosing children with similar difficulties is being devised. It is essential to develop awareness, explaining the special characteristics of children who, according to Tatiana Chernigovskaya, might win international Olympiads but receive low marks for dictation at school.

According to a poll initiated by the Association, 63% of those questioned knew nothing about dyslexia and other learning difficulties, which, according to world statistics, affect one child in five. Nor did they know that this is a widespread cause of children lagging behind their age group in the formation of individual skills. Moreover, about a quarter of respondents from a target group of specialists did not know this!

Tatiana Sinyugina, Russian Deputy Minister of Education (a speech therapist by education) admitted that for a long time this problem has been ignored in this country, but the ministry is now

Opening of the Week
in the General Staff Building.

Left:
McDonalds got involved in the Week in its own way: every customer received with their order a leaflet explaining what dyslexia and dysgraphia are.

Equal opportunities in education for all children is one of the fundamental state guarantees throughout the world. This right should be implemented regardless of families' living conditions, social or economic factors. In whatever country a child lives, whatever language he speaks and whatever special educational needs he has, he should become literate.

From the resolution summing up the Week



In this improvised classroom, children and adults were allowed to write on the desks and ask any questions.



taking measures to inform teachers and parents about it and relay their position to the regions: children must not all be assessed according to the same criteria.

Yuliana Slascheva, Chair of the Board of the 'Soyuzmultfilm' studio, spoke about the foundation of the 'Soyuzmultclub' educational centre, designed to take contemporary trends into account: preference for audio-visual receipt of information; conveying knowledge to children who do not know Russian well by means of animation; highlighting the subject of special children and a tolerant attitude towards them. A serial entitled 'The Checked Zebra' about children who are different is in production. As Maria Piotrovskaya said in conclusion, children with dyslexia and other learning difficulties mainly need the support of their families, so that parents do not see them as deprived and the children do not consider themselves to be worse than others. The most important thing for everyone to understand is that these are children whose intellect is intact.



Mikhail Piotrovsky, Tatiana Chernigovskaya and Maria Piotrovskaya took part in the opening of the Week in the General Staff Building. The ceremony took place in front of a real school class, with desks and a blackboard. On one of the walls were portraits of Elon Musk, Steve Jobs, Richard Branson and well-known actors and artists who in childhood had difficulties of learning and perception of the world, but that has not prevented them (it may even have helped them) to become famous. In this interactive area with the catchy title 'Dyslexia is not a Problem!' parents were able to chat to one another, with teachers and specialists, asking questions not only of Russian but also of foreign scientists, while the children watched cartoons and underwent a free express diagnosis.

In addition, there was a seminar entitled 'Methods of Detecting Predisposition and Dyslexia', a master class in neuro painting for children, a lecture on modern approaches to the assessment of reading skills by Elena Grigorenko, Profesor of Yale University and Head of the St. Petersburg State University's laboratory for interdis-

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ciplinary research into human development, a meeting with actor of stage and screen Evgeny Stychkin... And all this in the museum!

As Mikhail Piotrovsky said during a public conversation with Tatiana Chernigovskaya on the problems of education today, a museum, like no other place, teaches people to realize that differences are good, that people are not all the same...

A GUIDE TO THE WORLD OF ART

What impressed me most on a visit to the Louvre was not the Mona Lisa or the Venus de Milo. In one of the rooms I saw a dog that looked as if it had run in from the street and at first I thought: how did they let it in?! A moment later, I realized that it was a guide dog. Its owner was standing beside it, listening to the museum guide. The blind woman had a lovely face that radiated inner light. That face could probably be a symbol of the power of art unlocking sight.

That visit to the Louvre was in 2000. Recently, the Hermitage has again addressed the problem of creating a museum environment that is accessible to the blind and partially sighted. Programmes for children with sight problems have been held here for over ten years. The course 'The Past at your Fingertips', enabling people to penetrate into the world of archaeology through tactile sensations, is accompanied by the search for other ways of bringing visitors with special needs closer to art. Quite logically, a master class for the Hermitage staff members by representatives of the 'Art, Science and Sport' Charitable Foundation, part of the 'Special View' programme for the support of people with sight problems, was timed to coincide with International Guide Dog Day.

There are only two centres for training guide dogs in Russia. They are both in the Moscow Region, in the small towns of Zhelezodorozhny and Kupavna, but their 'pupils' are distributed over the whole country. Training a guide dog is a laborious process. It begins with the selection of a puppy. The two breeds that have proved to be most talented in this role are labradors and golden retrievers.



However, not every puppy seen at breeding centres is deemed suitable for work with the blind. The selection methods include primarily an assessment of the puppy's resistance to stress and predictability of behaviour: for example, they attempt to frighten the puppy by a shot from a starting pistol or by suddenly opening an umbrella in front of it. An acute panic reaction closes the path to the 'profession' for about nine out of ten candidates. A puppy that can survive this ordeal costs about 40,000 roubles, and a further 400,000 roubles is required for its further training and learning of special skills.

In approximately ten months, the future 'student' at the dog-training centre grows and is brought up by a volunteer family, where it develops canine intelligence and reasoning, learns good manners and becomes accustomed to living among people. A curator from the centre visits the puppy once a week and works with it. Only when it reaches its first birthday do the volunteers return their temporary pet to the trainers, who then embark it on a course of special training. In eighteen months or more, a guide dog must

Fly, the four-legged Hermitage guide.



In legal terms, a guide dog — a faithful friend and a member of the blind person's family — is equivalent to a technical means of rehabilitation, such as a wheelchair for someone with musculoskeletal problems.

Right:
If a dog is wearing a harness with the inscription 'guide dog', the usual prohibitions do not apply! Not in a local shop or in a museum of world importance.

Elina Pochueva of the 'Dogs — Assistants to Invalids' Guide Dog Centre, talks about the project.



be able to lead a blind person along traditional routes, committing them to memory. It also has to identify all the difficulties on the route — not only holes and manholes, steps and kerbstones, but also obstacles above it — low-hanging branches, for instance, under which a dog can pass but which could flick a person painfully in the face. One of a guide dog's most important skills is retrieving — the ability to pick up and return an object that the blind person has dropped, usually his stick. The process of becoming acquainted with and accustomed to its future owner takes place in the training centre, where the invalid comes to stay for two weeks, as a rule, after spending about eighteen months on the waiting list.

At the master class in the Hermitage, an announcement was made about the launch of a Russia-wide grant competition for blind and partially sighted people to receive a guide dog outside the waiting list. To enter the competition for partnership with a four-legged assistant, an applicant can send his story-application to the 'Special View' portal, and blind people who lead the most active lives will be allocated a guide dog free of charge. The grant will also cover all transport costs for the visit to the dog-training centre.

In legal terms, a guide dog — a faithful friend and a member of the blind person's family — is equivalent to a technical means of rehabilitation, such as a wheelchair for someone with musculoskeletal problems. Federal Law No.181 of 24.11.1995 'On the Social Protection of Invalids in the Russian Federation' guarantees 'conditions for unimpeded access to objects of social, engineering and transport infrastructure... including cultural organizations' — this includes blind people with guide dogs. Unfortunately, some employees of social-cultural institutions and restricted structures prefer to point to the sign 'Entrance with dogs is prohibited'.

Fly, the labrador who demonstrated his professional skill at a tour in the Hermitage, has encountered similar discrimination. His owner Natalya Kuznetsova told the story about a visit to a res-



taurant, where other customers helped to defend Fly's legal rights in an argument with the legally illiterate administration. Obviously the dog's charm also played its part — he was friendly, restrained and did not react to provocation with aggression.

A guide dog is a living communicator between a person with defective sight and the world around. Its functions in museums or exhibition halls, as in any other public place, are to protect its owner from undesirable collisions. However, in cultural institutions a guide dog, by attracting attention to itself, fulfils another important mission — to remind other visitors that a blind person is not only an object of concern and sympathy but also a full member of society with individual spiritual needs.

A Hundred Shades of *Thank You*

ON MAECENAS DAY WE LEARN TO THANK AND BE GRATEFUL

Sergey ARKADIEV. Photos: Svetlana Ragina, Evgeny Sinyaver, Timur Turgunov

There is always a feeling of emptiness after events like this. The 14th Maecenas Day, by common consent, was the best yet. However, we have no intention of resting on our laurels! We remember and analyse the results so as to continue moving forward.

By tradition, this celebration of philanthropists and socially responsible companies, which we conceived and hold annually with the State Hermitage, took place on 13 April — the birthday of the Ancient Roman aristocrat and patron of the arts Gaius Cilnius Maecenas, calculated from a Horace ode. This year the date fell on a Saturday, but...the time and place of meeting cannot be changed.

A display of imperial antiques featured in the Hermitage Theatre foyer — a table-screen from the Toilet, a card-table and box for firewood (given by Mikhail Karisalov) and a billiard table (given by Yury Abramov). They were all once part of the interior furnishings of the Winter Palace, as evidenced by the inventory numbers and

the mark 'И. 3. Д.' (Imperial Winter Palace), and now they have returned home. Next to them was a stage costume worn by Nikolay Tsiskaridze in the role of Count Albert in Adan's ballet *Giselle* at the Bolshoi Theatre — a gift to the museum from the famous dancer. Two sketches in oils for Vladimir Sterligov's *Restoration of the Hermitage*, which was never painted (it is striking that in the first post-war year of 1946 the sketches were painted on hessian, canvas not being available at that time), were a significant donation to the museum by Amir Kabiri, President of the Mansur Abraham Centre of Fine Art and the Hermitage Foundation in Israel.

On a table in the foyer was the 'visiting card' of one of the social projects — a composition of vegetables and fruit, almost indistinguishable from the real thing. It was produced by a studio of domestic carving headed by Lyubov Vaskova. She trains retired people in useful skills — the project is financed by the 'Good City of

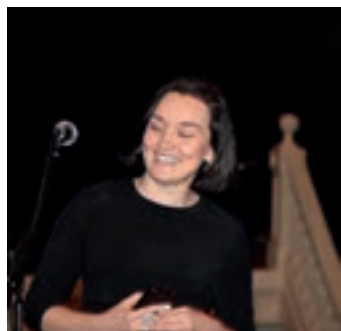


Timpone's painting *Maecenas Presenting the Liberal Arts to Emperor Augustus*, as seen by Anastasia E., a student at the 'Anton's Right Here' Centre.



Left to right:
Mikhail Piotrovsky, Arkady Sosnov
and donors — Arkady Ivzekev,
Yuru Abramov, Mikhail Karisalov.

Ekaterina Usanina.



St. Petersburg' Charitable Foundation (later the foundation's Deputy Director Ekaterina Usanina would speak about a new project: 'Social Innovations' — Russia's first fund of target capital for the support of the elderly). The appearance of Achilles the cat-prophet enlivened proceedings in the foyer — many people wanted to be photographed with him. Then the king of show business Filipp Kirkorov, who was visiting the Hermitage with his children, dropped in — all in all, it was certainly not boring.

Shortly afterwards, those taking part in the celebration went to watch a special switching on of the 'Peacock' clock. Back in the theatre, Hermitage Director Mikhail Piotrovsky, who opened the ceremony, said: 'We thought up this day to correct a mistake in our national character. It is difficult for us to say *Thank You*. Maecenas Day is not only about the capability of making donations and doing good deeds, but also about the ability to thank.' The

compere — Arkady Sosnov, Editor-in-Chief of the almanac, took up this thought as he began presenting the philanthropic projects. As always, the ceremony took place against the background of a Hermitage masterpiece — Giovanni Battista Tiepolo's painting *Maecenas Presenting the Liberal Arts to Emperor Augustus* (1745). This year, Tiepolo's 'co-authors' were students from 'Anton's Right Here' — Russia's only rehabilitation centre for people with autism. Their drawings, reflecting somewhat naïve but unprejudiced views on canvas, made the audience think how important it is to listen to and look out for those who are close by.

The scientist and philanthropist Mussa Ekzekov looks at the world with a child's eyes. Otherwise, he could hardly have been able to found the huge 'Grand Canyon' development centre in the Vyborg District, which is interesting and free-and-easy for children — with dozens of sports sections, artistic and technical clubs,

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and the 'Fruits of Enlightenment' Theatre, where Maxim Leonidov also recently opened his studio. Ekzekov explained that the prototype for 'Grand Canyon' was a canyon near his home village in Karachay-Cherkessia. The theme of the Caucasus also features in an expedition project that he assiduously supports. It is a study of the epic life of the Russian general Ivan Belyaev, who served in the Caucasus and, after his forced emigration, became a national hero of Paraguay. Nadezhda Emelyanova, a research worker at the Russian Academy of Sciences Institute of Global History who shares Mussa Ekzekov's views, donated the first copy of her new book *No Man is an Island. Ivan Belyaev. White General — Chief of the Redskins* to the Hermitage Library.

Goodness comes in many guises. Arkady Izvekov, General Director of the Cartier Jewellery House in St. Petersburg, spoke not only about his company's involvement in the restoration of jewels



from the Hermitage's Golden Storeroom, but also about his modest (his word) personal contribution to the cultural programmes of the Kochubey Centre in Pushkin. Before the revolution it was the mansion of Vasily Kochubey, Master of Ceremonies at the Court of His Imperial Majesty, collector and bibliophile. Today it is the training centre for instructors at the Higher School of Economics National Research University. The current owners are trying to recapture the spirit of their predecessors and gratefully accepted Arkady Izvekov's gift of an elegant late 19th century snuffbox to complement its collection of historic objects.

Natalya Metelitsa, Director of the Museum of Theatrical and Musical Art, also did not come to the event empty-handed — she brought three folios. She thanked Baltic Leasing, in the person of General Director Dmitry Korchagov, and the Konstantinovsky Charitable Foundation (General Director Gennady Yavnik) for



Vadim Bordyug (centre) tried on a special T-shirt.

Mussa Ekzekov and his daughter Amina.

Mikhail Piotrovsky and Konstantin Likholat.

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ТЕРРИТОРИЯ РАЗВИТИЯ

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ЛИЗИНГ**

Co-organizer of Maecenas Day 2019:
Journalist Centre Ltd.





Left to right, top to bottom in rows:
The team from Baltic Leasing; Natalya Orlova, Director of the Hermitage Theatre; gifts to the Hermitage Library from Nadezhda Emelyanova; carillonist Jo Haazen (Belgium, Russia); the latest issue of the almanac: artists Alexey Kiryanov and Ekaterina Posetselskaya, Natasha Delgyado (Vita Nova publishing house);

in the theatre; Natalya Metelitsa; blogger and public figure Natalya Kamolinkova; Irina Matvienko (Kochubey Centre); Valentin Elbek, President of the Historical Photography Foundation; Fyodor Turkin, Head of Rosstroyinvest;



Father Sergey (Rysev), Senior Priest of the Church of the Icon of the Mother of God 'Joy of All Who Sorrow' in Tosno; Achilles the fortune-telling cat, a public favourite; Aishat Takushinova with sketches by Vladimir Sterligov; Amir Kabiri (Israel); Liza Abramova; Lyudmila Derbilova and Natalya Zhukova (HOUSE of MUSEums Community).



Remiaowkable people Evgeny Vodolazkin and Achilles and Maria Khaltunen.

Pyotr Zakharov with a rousing rendition of *Smuglyanka*.

Vladimir Galouzine, the best Hermann in *The Queen of Spades*.

Photo on page 37:
The 'Anton's Right Here' Orchestra knows how to charm an audience.

their assistance in a reprint of the album of the museum's founder Levky Zheverzheev, with the autographs of Silver Age figures. Our almanac helped in the search for patrons. One of the hundred limited copies was presented to the Hermitage Library.

The new Museum of Architectural Ceramics in Peter and Paul Fortress (part of the Museum of the History of St. Petersburg), which opened just last year, was described by its initiator and active participant, the entrepreneur and ceramics expert Konstantin Likholat. We call such people creative philanthropists: they not only invest money in a project, but also their creative energy, professional skills and, probably most dear to them, their time.

Businessman Vadim Bordyug described how his inherited genes (he is a descendant of Leonhard Euler) influenced his decision to establish a stipend named after the great mathematician for students at St. Petersburg State University, of which he is a graduate. So was born an original intergenerational programme

of the St. Petersburg State University Graduates Association. The stipendiaries — Andrey Dryuk and Dmitry Zyryanov, students of the Faculties of Physics and Mathematics-Mechanics, presented their patron with a university T-shirt, which he promptly put on.

Towards the end of the ceremony, Mikhail Piotrovsky handed letters of gratitude to Yuri Abramov, Mikhail Karisalov, Amir Kabiri and other donors, but nobody thought of leaving. The handsome Achilles made another appearance, which preceded the award of the 'Remiaowkable People of St. Petersburg' prize, instituted a year ago by the State Hermitage, *Russian Maecenas* and the 'Republic of Cats' headed by Anna Kondratieva. The names of the new winners of the prize were announced by Mikhail Piotrovsky's assistant Maria Khaltunen, who is also the press secretary for the Hermitage cats. They were the writer Evgeny Vodolazkin, whose works include wonderful examples of the mutual friendliness and tolerance of people and cats, the artist Vladimir Rummy-

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antsev, whose paintings are largely responsible for St. Petersburg now being called the 'cat-cultural capital', and Father Alexander (Tkachenko), founder of the first children's hospice in Russia. The hospice makes active use of felinotherapy, relieving the stress of its young patients and members of their families with the help of furry therapists. After receiving his symbolic award, Evgeny Vodolazkin, the author of *Laurus*, *The Aviator* and other bestselling novels, said that he now had something to be proud of and called the Hermitage the most humane museum, because it welcomes and protects its cats.

Charity concerts have become a tradition at Maecenas Day: we invite pupils of social institutions, people with restricted movement, to the Hermitage Theatre. The programme, staged by the concert's Artistic Director Sofia Rukina, featured the Mariinsky Theatre soloist, People's Artist of Russia Vladimir Galouzine, who is considered to be the world's best performer of the role of Hermann in Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades*. Classic arias were followed by the rousing *Smuglyanka* — Pyotr Zakharov, winner of 'The Voice' TV show in 2018, won the audience's hearts with his velvety bass-baritone and charm. The programme ended with a performance by the 'Anton's Right Here' Orchestra, conducted by Alexey Plyusnin. This project, launched four years ago as musical therapy for people with autism, has become a proper creative group. On Maecenas Day, the orchestra performed a new programme together with saxophonist Dmitry Fyodorov — four compositions which held the audience's attention for half an hour. After the concert, Alexey Plyusnin shared his impressions. He said that, in the first place, playing on the stage of the Hermitage Theatre was a great honour, and, in the second place, the theatre has wonderful acoustics, which highlighted the shortcomings on which the orchestra has to work. An approach worthy of a real master!

We hope we all work towards good deeds. And learn to be grateful to those who do them.



His Own Little Piece of the Planet

A ST. PETERSBURG BUSINESSMAN IS CREATING A PARK OF CONTEMPORARY CULTURE IN THE EAST OF THE LENINGRAD REGION

Arkady SOSNOV. Photos: Maxim Boykov, Timur Turgunov, kawarga.ru, Maxim Titov's archive



Everyone who happens upon the village of Gonginichi in the Podporozhsky District of the Leningrad Region cannot help but notice a strange structure: could it be something left by an alien or the whim of a modern Eiffel? The latter is closer to the truth. Above the forests and lakes looms the Kawarga-Skete — a tower as tall as a seven-storey building made of metal constructions welded together and topped by a plastic dome of an irregular shape with teardrop windows. According to the Moscow artist Dmitry Kawarga, who built the tower, it is 'a special place for concentration of solitude'. The sculpture appears to grow out of a former state sawmill that has been turned into the artist's workshop, and techno music plays inside the sawmill and the tower (two different tracks).

Kawarga's work is a cross between art and technology. He started out as a traditional painter, but now creates synthetic images, hybrid essences, since 'man is moving further and further away from his

natural animal essence and turning to something totally inexplicable'. Examples of this transformation could be seen in the centre of St. Petersburg last summer: Dmitry Kawarga's series of sculptures entitled *Toxicosis of Anthropocentrism* was the first display of a museum line in Yakubovich Street (a project of the 'Manege' Central Exhibition Hall). The Kawarga-Skete is quite different — an example of biomorphism, an art form introduced in the early 20th century by the architect Frank Lloyd Wright and the sculptor Jean Arp. It is one of those monumental landscape objects that are bound to become arks for birds, bees, plants and animals in the forests and marshes.

'Biomorphic sculptures interact with nature, wind, rain and snow, and in this they are fundamentally different from museum exhibits', says the artist. 'No pedestals or frames! A work without a frame is a window into another world and is part of it. A work in a frame is already an object for the interior to a large extent, a sort of embel-

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Page 38: Dmitry Kawarga, biomorphic radical.

Maxim Titov at the top.



lishment or trophy, whereas for me art is a living, flexible medium.' Dmitry, a friendly, communicative man with a beard twisted into a plait, told me that when he first came to Gonginichi in winter a dog ran across the frozen lake to meet him. At first he took it for a wolf, but the 'wolf' came right up to him and licked his face. That provided an excuse to have a drink of the wonder-working 'kawargon' that he had brought with him and lapse into a slightly euphoric state. There was no comparison with his home near Moscow, which is surrounded by prosaic nature...

Dmitry Kawarga is a rare character, one of a kind. He is well known in Europe and it can be said to be a miracle that brought him to this backwater (330 kilometres from St. Petersburg). However, Maxim Titov, who owns 150 hectares of land in the area, helped to create this miracle: he supplied the artist with the materials to build the tower and the dome, and instead of a fee gave





Elena Kawarga and her son Nestor.

Toxicosis of Anthropocentrism.
Anna Yalova, one of the project's curators.



him a house with surrounding land. Maxim became so involved with Kawarga's ideas that he helped with the welding and building, and together with the composer Kryptogen Rundfunk (real name Artyom Ostapchuk) recorded industrial noises in a St. Petersburg factory to play in the art object.

In short, the businessman Maxim Titov fell into the magical field of Kawarga's creativity, which is hard to put into words. 'The Eiffel Tower was also originally given a hostile reception, but now it is an integral part of Paris,' he usually tells critics. He has already begun to have his own artistic fantasies — for instance, to install traffic lights at an intersection of paths in the forest, which would operate regardless of whether people or animals were passing through. He is obsessed by a cherished idea that he shares with Dmitry Kawarga: to create a park of biomorphic structures over his whole territory in special locations — these picturesque places will then attract visitors and the recreational potential of Vinnitsy, the most remote, largest and most sparsely populated rural settlement in the Leningrad Region, will be unlocked. Anticipating this boom in tourism, the partners have built a

holiday centre — five cottages with an excellent banya on the bank of Gonginskoe Lake.

The boom has already started. The tower had its first foreign visitors last summer. 'A group of Finnish bikers, who just happened to be passing the Kawarga-Skete, were amazed, timidly knocked at the gate and asked about it,' Dmitry wrote on his Facebook page. 'I opened the gate, let them go up to the dome and switched on Artyom Kryptogen's soundtrack. And while they were clambering up, I experienced a feeling that is rare and unusual for me: a half-sense of not being ashamed of my country. After all, their route consisted of contemplation of the ruined churches, cut-down forests and deserted villages of our immense land, but here were the shoots of creativity.'

This creativity has been supplemented by Dmitry's co-participants in exhibitions of contemporary art — Zsolt Berszan-Markos and Scilla Szabo, Hungarian artists living in Romania who visited him at the end of July. Working feverishly in the sawmill, they created the first exhibit of the future art museum — a biomorphic element, suspended and moving on a cable, symbolizing adaptation to an expanse. A scale model of the Kawarga-Skete brought by Dmitry from Moscow can be considered to be the second exhibit, and the third — a collage of photographs recording the construction process of the object that rises above the horizon (as is the custom in museums).

The unveiling of the sculpture was preceded by an event that cannot be explained from a scientific point of view. A heavy crane was needed to lift the 21-metre construction that weighed eight tonnes into place (the 'Pioneer' hoist that had helped in the assembly of the two lower sections was of no use). Bringing such a crane to Gonginichi seemed impossible: the dilapidated bridge across the River Salma would not take the weight, and it was autumn: the circuitous route was impassable. Dmitry was already preparing to go home when suddenly, as if by magic, repair work started on the bridge (Maxim had not even asked about this, knowing how meagre the local budget is)! The artist cashed in his tickets to Moscow and began to wait pa-



tiently. He waited until the first snowfall, and a week later on a sunny day he saw his dream come true: a trailer carrying a 25-ton crane from Vozneseniye (whether the bridge's reinforcement was the result of the efforts of Alexander Kuznetsov, Head of the Vinnitsy Municipal Authority, who is a fan of techno art, or whether the priorities of the regional programme had suddenly shifted remains a mystery).

Another historic event was when the first disabled climbed the tower, which not every able-bodied person can manage. This hero's name is Denis Mikhailov, who is under the care of the 'Podorozhnik' social organization. The organization's mastermind Andrey Dom-brovsky has set up a camp for young people with physical disabilities on a secluded bank of the River Tuksha. The 2.5-hectare plot of land was given to him by none other than Maxim Titov — not only given but presented to him on a silver salver, with a land survey plan already in place (anyone in the know will understand the value of this). Andrey is teaching young people in wheelchairs to live and work outside of institutions, instilling in them skills and abilities that they would not obtain in a state establishment. For example, they are learning to use a rotavator (not only as farming implement but also as a powerful training apparatus for various groups of muscles), to saw and chop wood, to build using the cordwood construction method, to cut grass with a strimmer and to ferment tea from herbs — an enviable range of competences! Just as importantly, these competences are breeding the self-confidence and inner freedom without which the young people would not be able to leave their institutions and lead normal lives, as well as the facility to be not afraid of anything new — a fear that has kept them suppressed since childhood. Denis was certainly not afraid — he first looked at the strange tower from bottom to top, then came across the lake in a boat with Andrey and...decided on his crazy venture. He had to get out of his wheelchair and find a 'step-by-step' algorithm of movement with Andrey. The climbers admitted that at the very top, before the steep, narrow ten-step staircase, they were 'on their last

The church in Gonginichi. 1845.
Burned down during military operations
in October 1941 (according to the information
of local historian Mikhail Kurilov).

Children in Gonginichi. 1929.

Finnish bikers at the Kawarga-Skete. 2019.

'We did it — we climbed the Kawarga-Skete!', wrote Andrey on his VKontakte page. 'The climb with Denis Mikhailov, Maxim Boykov and my son Fedya took two hours, but the descent — only one hour. I can imagine how much effort it took from Denis, but he managed it, well done! Follow Denis's example, overcome your difficulties and become a little better'. He attached a photograph to his post: Denis sitting in the dome with a happy smile.

'The dome sways in the wind, a meditative soundtrack plays with carefully selected frequencies and inside of the dome you feel that you are in a special protected place, like in a biomorphic shell. Finally, the views of the sky, the forests and the houses from that height enable you somehow to rise above the hustle and bustle of the world. In this way, a contemporary work of art is not only an adornment to the environment but also helps people to escape the constraints of everyday life, change their consciousness, get in the mood for spiritual work...'

Dmitry KAWARGA
on the idea of the Kawarga-Skete



Ivan Sharipov in the 'Podorozhnik' camp.

Denis Mikhailov, Andrey Dombrovsky and his son Fedya in the dome of the art object.



Expedition to Korbozero. 1973.

gasp'. Their vocal chords, like a spare battery, helped them to take the summit by storm.

So the Kawarga-Skete has begun to influence the surrounding area and the people living there. However, the tower too is gradually changing. On his latest trip Dmitry made manholes so that water would not get inside the sculpture, glazed the apertures in the dome in the interests of safety, repaired the fence and installed another video camera inside the dome — there are now eight of them, so it only remains to put the film on the Internet so that anyone can observe this work of art. However, he also found time for fishing with a spinning rod, as the lake is full of roach, bream, zander, pike and perch (last summer he built his first boat from the same materials as the tower — it is not fast, but it is beautiful and has quickly become a floating art object). His month in the country flew by unnoticed.

Meanwhile, Maxim brought a polystyrene foam disc to Gonginichi (that material was also used in the building of the dome). The disc bears the coordinates of the solar system and symbols of civilization on Earth (the same symbols that were sent to distant planets on the American



'Voyager' spacecraft). He installed the disc by the entrance gate to the Kawarga-Skete. Maybe it will attract the attention of aliens to the art object? Titov had previously attempted to make contact with aliens: he took the time to study a crater on the bank of Korbozero Lake — the place where a UFO fell in 1961, shortly after Gagarin's space flight. He got hold of materials from a semi-secret expedition to Korbozero — data of an analysis of metal fragments collected from holes in the ice. Although the arrival of an alien craft was never confirmed, he and Dmitry plan to install a thematic structure on that bank.

One can only stand in admiration at the zeal displayed by Maxim Titov in his study of the territory he inherited after purchasing the land that previously belonged to the employees of the former sovkhov (state farm). He has even gone back as far as the Mesolithic age (8,000–5,000 BC)! He discovered from the results of archaeological expeditions that there were ancient settlements along the banks of the Orenzhenskoye Lake, evidenced by stone working implements found during the expeditions, and now there are settlements of wild tourists there — a deep-seated link between the ages. Maxim has studied

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maps of the Lodeynopolsky District from the 17th century and from the Soviet period and, in the Petrozavodsk archive he found a sketch of the church at Gonginichi (1845) and church correspondence. In the Russian Geographical Society's archive he found reports of an ethnographic expedition to Gonginichi and the surrounding area in 1929. Now all this surrounding area is his land, isn't that cool?

As a native of St. Petersburg, he never aspired to be a landowner. After finishing school (with almost exclusively good marks), he went to a Professional-Technical School to study the shoe industry as 'there was no such thing as aims in life'. He thoroughly mastered the profession: he could design and make any footwear, and provided shoes to all his relatives and friends. After graduation, he went to work in a cooperative society that made ladies' shoes which, considering the shortages during perestroika, sold like hot cakes, but it was not the job he wanted. He became involved in the processing of animal skins (collective farms were closing, the livestock was going under the knife and the skins of the unfortunate cows and pigs were profitable exports). Maxim travelled around collective farms, having phoned them

in advance from home. He and his driver tore along country roads. He was loader, weigher and accountant — he had his share of adventures. After that, he dealt in non-ferrous scrap metal, of which there was more than enough in the farming area, and dumped factory metal rolling. His 'Great Lakes' company put out branches — at its peak, it employed around a hundred people in various cities.

In parallel, Titov graduated from the St. Petersburg Academy of Management and Economics in the speciality of 'manager of an organization'. He also learned from the books and lectures of the management guru Vladimir Tarasov, so that he understood the meaning of diversification in business. After closely examining the experience of the Finns, he started opening fish farms. In spring 2008, his employees began fishing the Orenzhenskoye Lake and delivered the creels to Svir and Kimozer. Everything was done in strict accordance with the law, including obtaining leases for the pools and stacks of other authorizing documents. In their best years, they were supplying a hundred tons of fish annually — the Svirskiy Ogn newspaper called them 'the discoverers of Podporozhsky trout'.

Maxim is self-critical: his perfectionism hampered the development of the business. While he, in an attempt to create an ideal company, was trying to use the concept of 'lean production' in Russian conditions, the market was taken over by aggressive companies, which, in their pursuit of profit, ignored labour protection and safety standards and infringed the licensing regulations. He adopted the best practices: if it was tourism, then it should be modelled on the Dutch 'Landal Green Parks' brand, or the building of an ecologically clean domed village on a large hill near the village of Lashkovo according to the Swiss example, or a system of paths along the banks of the lakes with access to the islands by suspension bridges of composite materials. He talked to local experts, sketched out routes and took beautiful photographs and videos from a helicopter. He even sought advice from Elena Chubakova, President of the Great Baikal Trail, who shared with him the motto 'You can see the stars better when

Left:
Zsolt Berszan-Markos
and Scilla Szabo: the birth
of a masterpiece.

This creativity has been supplemented by Dmitry's co-participants in exhibitions of contemporary art — Zsolt Berszan-Markos and Scilla Szabo. Working feverishly in the sawmill, they created the first exhibit of the future art museum — a biomorphic element, suspended and moving on a cable, symbolizing adaptation to an expanse.



Maxim Titov was a regular participant in the 'Agorus' fair.



Territory of Success



The 'Tree of Life' Vepsian festival led by Nadezhda Kovalskaya has become a traditional event in the Leningrad Region. This year, the village of Vinnitsy, where the festival was held, won third prize in the national competition for 'Best Municipal Practice' in the category 'Reinforcement of Inter-National Peace and Harmony and Implementation of Other Measures in the Sphere of National Policy'.

Thanks to financing from the regional budget, the Vepsian Folklore Centre is not just surviving but thriving. It has a staff of nearly thirty, including the ballet master Yulia Pigareva, who knows all the subtleties of the quadrille — the Veps people's favourite dance. Each village has its own quadrille. Last summer, the 'Tree of Life' festival attracted 5,000 visitors and over 30,000 people visited the Centre.



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your roof's gone' and warned him that natural obstacles were easier to overcome than bureaucratic ones. Titov had already been convinced of that several times.

In addition, he has expended a great deal of energy on imaging and social projects. He dreamed up a pavilion in the shape of a creel for the 'Agrorus' International Fair. He took part in the organization of the first district Memory Watch in 2008. He provided creative assistance to Nadezhda Kovalskaya, Director of the Vepsian Folklore Centre, in the traditional 'Tree of Life' festival: it featured a café on the bank of the River Oyata with good-quality homemade furniture, a fishing competition, boating and horse riding and souvenirs. Not for nothing does Alexander Kuznetsov, the mayor of Vinnitsy, joke about his 'magic wand': 'If we realize at the last moment that posters have not been printed — who will help? Maxim!'

'In supporting the festival, I was also pursuing my business aims — to attract attention to the places where Veps live and their culture, so that the number of visitors will increase and the value of my land will also increase, but, most importantly, it is interesting for me', says Titov. This is his style: thinking about capitalization, but unselfishly. As a result, the whole district knows him, but what about his business? The financial crisis of 2009 weakened the position of factory-suppliers, and also 'Great Lakes' — the processing of scrap metal had to be curtailed and the fish-farming business reduced to one farm, while tourism had to be shelved to await better times.

However, Maxim still had an island of stability in this turbulent market: his 150 hectares of multipurpose land. The plots were wedge-shaped and not suitable for the cultivation of crops: because of the slope down to the lakes all the fertilisers would slide down into the water. Maxim looked for a better use for them and with Dmitry Kawarga's help he has found it. To be more accurate, the artist first found the businessman.

'Flicking through Avito in search of a secluded house in the forest, I came across something that seemed suitable. I exchanged letters



Irina Aktuganova under the roof of her house.

Professor Andrey Ponomaryov.

with Maxim, who turned out to be unusually responsible and even something of a creative person himself. He offered me a completely different house in exchange for my creative hocus-pocus with his saw-mill and gave me carte blanche' — that is how the biomorphic radical Dmitry Kawarga describes the circumstances of their acquaintance. But who gave him the idea of flicking through addresses in the Podporozhsky District? It turns out that a whole population of artistic people had already settled in these parts before him.

The search for the beginning of the chain took us to a hill near the village of Lashkovo — the same hill that Maxim Titov had chosen for his domed village project. While he was taking measurements, tourists were visiting the top of the hill with its stunning view of the river Oyat valley. It is a place that Irina Aktuganova, curator of museum and exhibition projects in the art & science field and founder of 'Gallery 21' at the Pushkinskaya, 10, Art Centre in St. Petersburg, also visited (as long ago as the late 1970s her future husband, physicist Ser-





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gey Busov, had bought a house with no amenities in the neighbouring village of Srednyaya). In the end, Irina thought: why do I keep coming to this viewpoint when I could be living here? She has proved that it is easiest to blend into the surrounding environment as an individual, having built a module house with windows in the floor and a veranda with a view. The environment tries hard to devour it with the help of hornets, mice and ants, and swallows have managed to build a nest under its minimalist corrugated roof — in the best traditions of biomorphism.

Irina recommended the area to the Moscow artist Artyom Paramonov and his wife Vladlena Gromova, also progressive art & science figures. Artyom, in his turn, suggested to Dmitry Kawarga that there was such a place as the Oyat Region, which the noise and neon lights of big cities could not reach.

A scientific network is also developing. At Busov's insistence, his fellow physicist Andrey Ponomaryov, a specialist in construction materials who is currently a professor at the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, bought a house in the village of Lavrovo in the 2000s. He intends to build a laboratory in the village. The conditions are suitable: clean water, no leasing charge... Ponomaryov has developed wood-composite cellular constructions that combine lightness and durability: a 6 x 1-metre panel can bear a load of more than a tonne. It is an ideal material for bridges on ecological paths, which is why Titov has been negotiating with him.

Maxim wants to make allies of all the representatives of the creative elite who have taken a fancy to these villages — Lavrovo, Lashkovo, Bakharevo, Srednyaya, Pogostye, Gonginichi... The list is quite long: artist Alexandra Ovchinnikova, her sister Dasha and brother Dmitry, now director of the 'Ladoga Trophy', who are musicians, their father Alexander Ovchinnikov — a physicist, curators Sergey Busov, Irina Aktuganova and Sergey Alyokhin, musician Andrey Popovsky, physicist Andrey Ponomaryov, designer Alexander Khodot and artists Artyom Paramonov, Vladlena Gromova, Dmitry and Elena Kawarga.

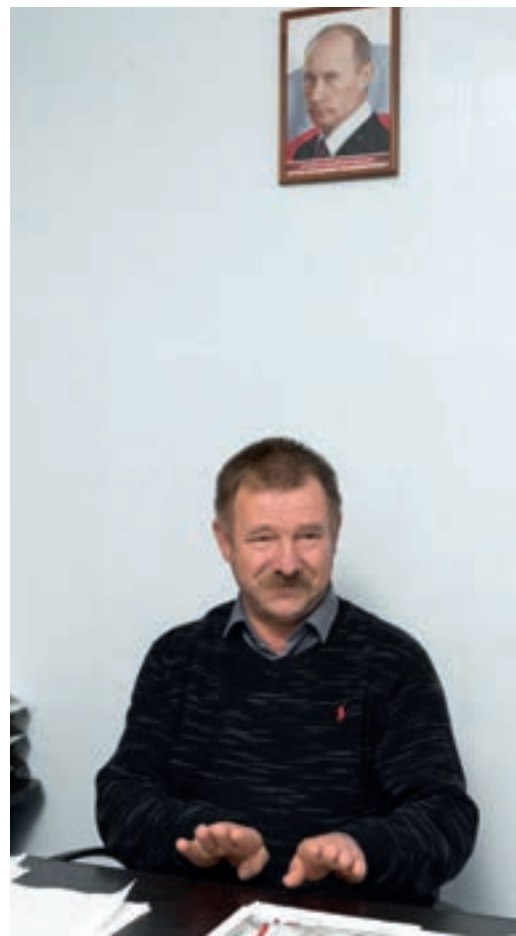


Vladimir SHVEDOV, a businessman who is creating a model village at Sarozero. He has opened a school of cultural hunting, keeps horses for riding and has taken the 'Vepsian Hut' museum under his wing. He has built a chapel to the Prophet Elijah on Holy Island, a landing-stage and a runway for light aircraft and helicopters. He thinks the salmon and grayling rivers are the district's most underrated resource.

Svetlana ERSHOVA, director of the local history museum in the village of Kurba. A schoolteacher collected the exhibits on rambles with her pupils around deserted villages. For the children this was a real experience of direct contact with Vepsian culture. The logging depot in Kurba closed down, people moved away and only a few children remained in the primary school and kindergarten, but Svetlana continues to preserve this invaluable heritage. It is as though she and the museum are looking after one another.



Sergey OLSHIN, an employee of the 'Vepsian Forest' nature reserve, is a skilled builder of houses with round timber for tourists who prefer well-appointed accommodation to tents.



Alexander KUZNETSOV, the mayor of Vinnitsy, is proving by example that the authorities should be close to the people. He was born in the village of Kuzra near the Oyat and now lives in Vinnitsy (in a three-room flat of 48 square metres in an apartment block). The extent of the territory entrusted to him is 'two St. Petersburgs and a bit more'. He has a budget of 23–25 million roubles per annum for 38 inhabited localities, which says it all, though there are, of course, fewer residents than in St. Petersburg — 3,100 in summer and about half of that in winter. Tourism swells the local budget only indirectly. Events like the 'Tree of Life' festival, attended by the regional authorities, are more lucrative. Thanks to this year's festival, there is now a decent road to Vinnitsy (previously there was twenty kilometres of dirt road on the section from Zayatskaya and Tumazy, which coach drivers refused to use).

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Artyom Paramonov and Vladlena Gromova and their family feel at home in Bakharevo.



Vyacheslav NURAEV (centre) has been coming to Zayatskaya since he was five, initially to visit his grandparents but now to his own house. He hunts, fishes, battles with poachers and fights for the cleanliness of the forest and banks: 'My daughter is 14, she likes it here. She will grow up, get married and give us grandchildren. I want to preserve this beauty for them'. The 'piled-up' Kawarga-Skete amidst this primeval nature does not appeal to Vyacheslav, but he and Maxim Titov are unanimous that Peski must be saved.

And a rotavator came in useful.

Aktuganova thinks: why not try? There is an art park called Nikola Lenivets around the village of that name in the Kaluga Region, and it hosts the annual 'Arkhostoyaniye' festival. Irina and her colleagues once thought of setting up an art community with permanent residence and teaching the children themselves in the local school: physics, music, literature, languages... But everyone has things to do in the capitals, and the capitals are far away (unlike Nikola Lenivets, where the organizers of the project live), and nobody has the courage to change their lifestyle so radically. But making a park of sculpture without changing their way of life is a real possibility, even without great expense, as long as there is the will of the artists and proactive management.

The village of Bakharevo, the home of the Moscow experimental artists Artyom Paramonov and Vladlena Gromova from the 'Various Artists Laboratory', creators of a scientific interactive project for the Polytechnic Museum, is remote even by Vinnitsy standards. Travelling

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to it along the short but difficult road suggested by Irina cost Maxim a ripped-off bumper, but he was not upset and was greeted warmly by the owners. Artyom and Vladlena have settled on the edge of the village and are gradually turning their wooden ark into an art residence. Their plot of land has apple trees, gooseberry and chokeberry bushes, and on the lake there is fishing and freedom for the children to run wild. They bake Karelian pasties in the Russian stove: a woman from the next village gave them the recipe. And it is not important that the mobile shop comes only once a week. Maxim's heart began to beat faster when he heard from Vladlena that they were interested in creating things for themselves and burying objects in nature. It was if he gave them a tick: aha, another pair of biomorphic radicals — they'll do!

Titov realizes that the views of the creators of art and those who see it can differ — spectators require at least basic comforts. Visiting the art park and returning to the city on the same day is not possible, so a tourist infrastructure is required, if only on a municipal level.

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There are no hotels in Vinnitsy. There was an attempt to open a café, but it was not profitable as there was insufficient custom. The Vepsian Folklore Centre can educate and entertain visitors and treat them to shanezhki (Karelian patties) and other dainties, but only in a very reduced form, though the Centre's staff say that, given the right residential and catering conditions, they could organize a two or three day programme for tourists, including visits to Nemzha, the Cross-Stone and other cult places for the Veps people.

Nobody can move a cart alone. Maxim is constantly pestering officials and the local community. Along with Vyacheslav Nuraev, a resident of the village of Zayatskaya who also cares about the environment, he organized a team of volunteers to clear the only sandy beach in the whole district, known as Peski (Sands). The beach is at the point where two lakes converge — the large Orenzhenskoye Lake and the smaller Novoye Lake, separated by a strip of forest. The peninsula is also Maxim's property, but he has opened it up for general



use. On a cold autumn day, in wind and rain, the group of enthusiasts fell upon the rubbish as if it was their personal enemy. They constructed a little bridge over the channel that intersects the beach and blocked both entrances to Peski with boulders so that no cars could get through. They put up Water Protection Zone signs and banners with photographs of the exemplary beaches and a link to the ecological website Оренжа.рф. Andrey Dombrovsky, the leader of 'Podorozhnik', took away boards and bags of rubbish on his motor cultivator. Maxim was everywhere, and took the young volunteers from Podporozhye, who had heard of him as the instigator of the district's Memory Watch, to see the Kawarga-Skete — the number of admirers of biomorphism grew.

That is probably all you need to know about Maxim Titov's business strategy. He has conceived an attractive project with an art park, but is attentive to detail in the process. And like the Little Prince, he has been putting his planet in order first thing in the morning.

During the clean-up operation a banner with photographs of exemplary beaches and a reference to the website Оренжа.рф were put up on the beach.

Peski as seen from a helicopter.



Let us Enjoy the Peace

THE RESTORATION OF THE CHINESE PALACE AT ORANIENBAUM IS CONTINUING WITH THE SUPPORT
OF GAZPROM AND GAZPROM TRANSGAZ ST. PETERSBURG

Sergey TEPLOV. Photos: Alexey Shverikas, Evgeny Scherbakov



‘The history of this palace is unique’, says Elena Kalnitskaya, Director of Peterhof State Museum-Reserve, referring to the Chinese Palace, known as ‘the empress’s little house’. ‘It was Catherine the Great’s regular correspondent Voltaire who instilled in her the ideas of Chinese philosophy. Catherine introduced the term “Chinese wisdom”: she began building Chinese palaces and wrote Chinese tales for her grandsons. Her enthusiasm was reflected in the Chinese Palace: interest in the Orient, the desire to be in step with the age, the quintessentially French tradition of light, frivolous furnishings. Everyone who came to Oranienbaum was struck by this building.’

The palace, built between the late 1750s and 1768 to a design by the Italian architect Antonio Rinaldi, was part of Empress Cath-

erine II’s ‘Private Dacha’. Its interior furnishings, in spite of a certain restraint and austerity, gladden the eye by their exquisite design. The features of exceptional value are the marquetry floors laid down by Russian joiners to Rinaldi’s drawings, the ceilings by masters from the Venice Academy of Arts and the mouldings made by Alberto Giani with artificial marble, which was fashionable in the rococo period.

A major restoration of the palace’s west wing began in 2018. This part contained Catherine II’s rooms, including the famous Chinese Studies. Two rooms will be open to the public by summer 2020: the Stucco Chamber, decorated with delicate mouldings and paintings, and the Small Chinese Study, with painted silk on the walls.

The Stucco Chamber owes its name to its delicate moulded décor. This cosy room was set aside for society pastimes, which explains



its rich artistic furnishings and paintings. The walls and ceiling are adorned by canvases dedicated to the theme of love, with depictions of characters from mythology and literature. The furniture consists of carved gilt benches and stools made in Russia in the 1760s, as well as a marquetry cylinder bureau made in France in about 1766 especially for the Chinese Palace.

The Small Chinese Study is designed in the *chinoiserie* (Chinese) style, which was widely used in the furnishing of the palace's interior in the 18th century. The decoration contrasts with other rooms in the palace on account of its geometrical ornaments combined with an intricate floral pattern. The walls are covered with gold silk, reconstructed on the pattern of 18th century Chinese silk in the Oranienbaum collection: it is painted with exotic birds, butterflies and flow-

ers. The marquetry floor, whose range of types of wood is of rare elegance and richness, has figured insets with Chinese hieroglyphs and a skilful depiction of a vase with a flowering twig.

'Helping to preserve and restore Russian architectural masterpieces is one of the priorities of our company's social policy', comments Head of Department Sergey Kupriyanov, Press Secretary of the Chairman of Gazprom. 'We are pursuing numerous projects, including financing the restoration of the Chinese Palace. Since 2009 the company has been a permanent partner of Peterhof State Museum-Reserve in the conservation of this unique monument of Russian architecture. In that time ten of the palace's seventeen rooms have been opened to the public. We plan to finish the whole project by December 2024.'

The Chinese Palace.

'The programme of the restoration of the Chinese Palace has no analogues. The Gazprom Group has taken the whole financing of the restoration of the interiors on itself. The façade was already finished, but thanks to Gazprom's support we have the possibility of opening restored rooms each year'.

Elena KALNITSKAYA



The Pink Drawing Room.

The Anterroom.

The Bugle Study.

The Damask Bedchamber.

Paul's Study.