

Review of the exhibition "Life is Beautiful", 2006.

One can easily count the years after Natalia Popovich has graduated from the Far East State Academy of Fine Arts. Therefore we can consider the present phase of her creative life as the very beginning, fundamental stage of founding her way to her own uniqueness. However there's something that prevents me from pronouncing those trivial words right on the eve of Natalia's personal exhibition in Primorye Art Gallery. Her art touches and finds respond deep in human heart and instills in the rhetorical question: "Is it really a prologue? Can this be called a debut? You look what a clutch! And what power of self-confident personality overwhelms her canvases!" Her creative manner states: "I am in progress! I am going on and on!" There is the evident picture of the extraordinary talent that is living and existing in no dependence on standard vision of a young artist. The exhibition demonstrates the authentically rich and expressive painting. There lives some music within it, which belongs to the very depth of human soul. Special attention should be paid to the internal tone of Natalia's paintings. Everybody knows the maxim: "Each time sings its own songs".

This can be said about painting too. Well, contemporary art in Russia of the last decade finds itself wherever but too far from realism. A great number of artists have stepped aside from realistic art, just to become a part of the abstract trends of modernism. And what a number of those artists have become just what is not called "nor fish neither flesh". They turned away; they have not found their way. They didn't gain, they have lost. They are drifting along, living their dull and weary life, and they have the nerve to call themselves artists! Nowadays we have to observe a noticeable decay in the field of taste for healthy art. Not exhibition-goers are responsible for it, but artists. They become conduits of awry, sophisticated, ruining tastes.

Natalia Popovich is "singing her songs" in spite of all negative tendencies in art. Her creativeness appeals and takes away by its integrity and authentic realism; by mighty power of her expressiveness. The artist proves that the only recent news in art is talent, which has nothing to do with the new fashioned borrowings.

Natalia has the talent which speaks for itself. The fluids of her multifaceted vocation for painting come from her canvases of all genres. One can recognize her manner of dynamic painting in still life, landscape and portrait. What is the most important and sacred about her style and what is expressed through it is the rainbow- shining -fountain of her joyous vivaciousness, her infinite vitality, that wins over all deaths.

On the back-ground of our neurasthenic time of grim symbols Natalia's pure joy for life seems to be a rare exclusion. This joy is a creative credo of the artist, which implies her position of the society member whose world-vision is positive, who challenges the negativism promoted in mass media. The artist challenges the ruining abyss of dark and by opposing this extreme, fights for the absolute of shining light.

I caught myself on the thought: "What has become of us? The optimism that was the everyday belonging of the Soviet art seems nowadays some heroic exclusiveness. We are ready to give our bow to an artist for the optimistic gasp of oxygen!" There not so many optimistic artists now. Natalia is one of them. Realism at present is much more than just the manner of performance.

Realism is the catalyst of positive ways in art. Realism is a characteristic of the human image of an artist, who is not indifferent for people, who never forgets that his addressees, spectators and interlocutors are people. In one word, realism is humanism. Though it is very difficult to become a complete realist today.

An artist when alone realizes how hard it is to reach a creative uniqueness on the background of millennia tradition of figurative painting and to purify one's works from the inherited classical associations to introduce one's realistic art in its actual accordance with today's life.

Natalia Popovich is that very artist whose art witnesses that realism is unexhausted, as it has no coasts. There's something in it from the eternal, which belongs to the life on Earth. As mythological Antea, realistic art always takes power from the Earth to live, to be well and renovated.

Natalia's realism is marked with traditionalism yet evidently reflects the present time. Her style deals with the picturesque speech that was born from the perception and transformation of the passed XX century.

Conscious preferences for the sake of realism are concentrated in the artist's works, along with the influence of various styles that for a century have been created the atmosphere of art. The expressiveness and activeness of Natalia's brush is added with the acuteness of the pure hues presentation and the flatness of an abstract color spot. Natalia is able to name each and every thing with a name of a color. Her visible world is not an imitation of reality, but a picturesque metaphoric interpretation. In fact each still life or landscape of hers introduces Natalia's translation of nature and her own transformation of reality. Each painting of hers is accompanied with the internal commentary of the author: "This is how I see it. This is how I feel". Her will power and fearless communication with nature along with her clear goal-orientation are a part of Natalia's creative temperament reflected on her canvases.

With all that said, her objective world is not represented as a visible number of details. She does not pay much attention to any properties of things and matter; she notices practically nothing but the color filling of nature. To create a canvas is to make a bright and colorful spectacle. Besides that, Natalia Popovich brings the color shining up to its absolute boundary, behind which there is no mild blend-combination, but there appears a wild decorativeness, which is about explosion. Nobody in Primorye by now has mastered such an energetic and powerful decorativeness of color. On the other hand, Natalia makes it nobler through her delicate manner and variable spectrum of decorative approaches.

Decorativeness as a goal in easel painting is always hiding a danger of simplification and impoverishment. Why is it so? As a matter of fact, pure decorativeness can not be considered the most typical feature of nature. Human being is a part of nature, its child and disciple. As the exhibition-goers, people often perceive the decorative generalization of color and plasticity as the voluntary daring towards Mother-nature. Such innovations can be attractive just for some short time; then comes weary tiresome of unsuccessful decorative opus. Well, when does luck come?

Natalia's canvases explain everything with a proper argumentation. Why can we watch them long? Why do they take us away? Why do they attract us? Why do we feel like admiring them again and again? Because the decorativeness we find in Natalia's works has nature as its source. There is nothing thought-out, or deliberately invented. The artist is inspired by nature, charmed by it. Nature leads Natalia in her creative process, nature directs her brush. Mastery is not her only evident advantage. She is truly God-gifted in terms of color and perceives it laconically as some decorative and yet an entirely vivid phenomenon. She is able to combine colors in accordance with their nature hues. As a result the motives of nature, the still life compositions live in the airy space of light, as impressionists saw them, in their special metaphorically picturesque manner.

Therefore even the most decorative canvases are not conditionally-pale neither abstractly-significant. One can always comprehend their accordance with nature as if it served as the painting tuning fork. Nonetheless Natalia Popovich does not consider nature tune as a part of her goal to caiques what she sees; nature is the basic impact for interpretation of what her soul lives through. The devotion for nature and freedom of communication with it are apart of creative world of the artist. Her canvases awake us with their acute intercourse, which implies a merry game of the real and the virtual, the truthfulness of life and the poetic imagery. The harmonious common denominator reigns in paintings of the exhibition and brings us sensations that are transformed in the line: "What a wonder is the world!"

Well, if there is something entirely young in the personal exhibition of Natalia Popovich, one can say it's her overwhelming joyous love for life. Natalia is taking her cup of carelessly happy emotiveness: "As I am happy, may the whole world be happy!" Her world-vision belongs rather to an inspired youth than to a balanced wisdom.

Her emotionally exaggerated experiences like those of Renoire's and Korovin's nonetheless open another quality of her potential, which is modest now, yet illustrated in her etude "The Cossacks' Circle" and in the portrait performance "The Gipsy-woman". These two paintings show the turn from the entirely hedonistic "pure art". They are still keeping to wonderful

colorist merits, and besides are carrying the load of characterization, and psychological comprehension; which is more -the awareness of human nature. The color is no longer a main thing. It becomes equal to other elements of the context in these two thematic works. Natalia Popovich has managed to reach the uneasy balance of artistic expressiveness of the form and the rich internal contents.

Portraits of Cossacks (as etudes in Repin's style for the "State Council Session") are the best proof of the artist's achievement. Their lapidary style and laconic form, which is a result of deliberate stroke of the brush is luckily added with the rich and bright individuality of human characters. The historical composition "The Cossacks' Circle" now seems to be the half of its prospective. There is a picture of many characters as well as the general plan of "The Chorus" according to the author's idea. But it is still the choir without soloists, action without characters, and music without accents. Nevertheless the work is going up in the world. Provided with the etude materials it is like a building in scaffolding. The main goal now is to express the whole through vivid details, in order to transform the crowd into the group of personalities.

As an etude in progress now the monumental "The Cossacks' Circle" created by Natalia Popovich is a remarkable piece of an active art and a daring creativity. Natalia has made an attempt to inhale true life into genre of thematic painting in the given circumstances of contemporary artless art of Russia. On the background of talks about the quietus of the genre, Natalia Popovich demonstrates her eagerness to grow higher of the primitive demands of her time towards the art of painting as the decorative production for fashionable interiors. Her "The Cossacks' Circle" gives her every opportunity to prove in future that all are wrong, but she is right, because of the Tightness of the talent. Primorye, as a region of younger history and culture needs such art. Our land is willing to see its images in the mirror of epic painting.

People of Primorye see Natalia Popovich as an artist who is able to commit such a remarkable creative act. She is one of those rear painters who have every advantage to realize the task.

By Vitaliy Kandyba. 2006.