The background of the text is a painting of a rural scene. It features a building with a thatched roof, a cow, and a boat. The style is impressionistic, with visible brushstrokes and a focus on light and color. The scene is set in a rural, possibly coastal or riverbank, environment. The colors are muted and earthy, with a palette dominated by browns, blues, and greys, accented with some red and yellow. The overall mood is somber and quiet.

THE GOLDEN AGE OF  
RUSSIAN IMPRESSIONISM  
1940 – 1960

THE KOHN COLLECTION





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1940 - 1960



THE GOLDEN AGE OF  
RUSSIAN IMPRESSIONISM  
1940 - 1960

WRITTEN BY  
ELENA KOHN

THE KOHN COLLECTION

**“...One of the Nation’s Premier Collections of  
Russian Impressionistic Painting.”  
Arizona Republic**

Acknowledgement

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# FOREWORD

## **“Art...is the transmission of feeling the artist has experienced.” Count Leo Tolstoy, What is Art?**

Impressionism, or art that has been termed “impressionistic,” has taken many forms. The work of the group of Parisian artists, who began to exhibit together in the mid-1870s, has spawned a host of national and regional interpretations. What all the variants to this bucolic style have in common is a concern with the plein-air rendering of a contemporary scene — very often landscape views. The extraordinary works from the Kohn Collection suggest a distinctly Russian interpretation of the natural world, a world that does not reflect the historic and social tensions of the Soviet Communist experiment.

The paintings discussed in this text vary enormously in terms of brushwork, choice of color (at times based on objective observation and at other times arbitrary, suggesting an expressionistic or emotional interpretation of a scene or sitter in a portrait), the use of palette knife and the manipulation of pictorial space. But what they all have in common is their focus on scenes of Russian rural life.

The affection for the life of country people and the inherent beauty of the Russian landscape has deep historic roots in Russian painting as far back as the early nineteenth century and the works of Alexei Venetsianov (1780-1847). His life, in a strange way, parallels that of the artists included in this volume on Russian Impressionism. Venetsianov fled St. Petersburg for his country seat at Safonkovo. In works like his “Summer” (ca. 1830, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow) one can find an artist who has turned his back on urban culture in favor of the pre-industrial world of the countryside.

So many of the artists represented in the Kohn collection also chose to abandon the city in favor of the farmlands, pastures and villages of Russia. They consciously chose to paint subjects that did not comply with the Soviet government’s notions that the visual arts should serve the propaganda needs of the state. There are strikingly few paintings in this collection which idealize the “worker” and the Communist ideals of the political state. The vast majority of the paintings in the Kohn Collection were executed during the traumatic times of the Second World War and the ensuing Cold War.

The works in the Kohn Collection responded to a modernism (essentially French), that predates the cubist, abstract and non-figurative works of the Russian avant-garde of the early twentieth century. The preservation of these paintings by Mr. Kohn, who for a time directed the Russian Artists Union, is a miracle. His decision to protect his collection by secretly sending the threatened paintings to his daughter in Arizona has afforded an American audience an opportunity to see and study a side of Russian art that lies outside the definition of the approved Socialist Realist art from the viewpoint of the former regime and an art that prospered despite the abstract/non-figurative tradition of the early twentieth century by artists such as Kandinsky, Chagall, Tatlin and Malevich.

The paintings from the Kohn Collection differ markedly from the concern for the romantic or political narrative so common to Russian art. Beginning in the 1860s with the Association of Free Artists group of painters who rebelled against the Italianate Neoclassicism favored by the Russian Academy of Arts. This breakaway group of painters began to focus upon scenes of peasant life and the Russian landscape. The triumphant beginning of the so-called “Wanderers” with the 1868 founding of The Society of Traveling Exhibition of the Works of Russian Artists (Tovarishchestvo peredvizhnykh vystavok proizvedenii russkikh khudozhnikov), shocked Russian academic critics with scenes of everyday life and customs in story-telling paintings that ultimately changed the direction of Russian modern painting. When the Bolshevik Revolution had succeeded and the new Soviet government decided quite intentionally to use narrative art as a basis for the approved Socialist Realist style, it supported only story-telling narratives in order to enhance and popularize Soviet policies and social reorganization. The works in the Kohn Collection created in the three middle decades of the twentieth century suggest a rejection of the politically-motivated narratives demanded by Soviet authorities. Though many of these artists continued to work for the government, the art in the Kohn Collection represents a private art, a musing on simpler times and the untroubled beauty of the Russian landscape. Ironically, after the collapse of the Soviet Empire, this art devoid of strong political messages, fell victim to the new social order of contemporary Russia. The works were perceived as old-fashioned and out of step with the notions of westernizing modern Russia.

The brightly-colored canvasses of the Kohn Collection provide a glimpse of peasant and middle class life not regimented by the political ambitions of the Soviet Politburo, nor the Romantic narratives so common to early modern Russian painting, such as the works of the “Wanderers” mentioned above. Indeed, the wide range of works in the Kohn Collection are a true expression of Tolstoy’s admonition that true painting is the expression of the personal experiences of the artist.

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# INTRODUCTION

## Behind the Iron Curtain...

The soul of Mother Russia is deeply imbedded in all of her people. They share a deep and abiding love for their land and cherish both its history and the very fabric of its culture. The spirit of Russia comes from the hearts of its people; no political turbulence can totally smother or destroy that which their souls hold dear. Nor does the spirit of any people, embodied in their art, recognize or acknowledge borders. The deep well of humanity, the universal feelings that thrive within the heart's dominion, these are the elements that forge the common bonds immortalized by art throughout the ages.

This book encompasses visual manifestations of hope and happiness that remained in the homes and studios of the talented Russian artists who painted them, representing the aspirations and dreams that flowered in their own hearts. These were not commissioned works, they were not sanctioned by the Soviet regime and therefore are not typical of publicly promoted presentations reflecting the political ideal. Many of these artists painted in secret and sometimes found it necessary to pilfer supplies, often scraps of canvas and even resorting to using locks of their hair to make crude brushes. They often went hungry because they used their free time to paint rather than stand in long lines for meager rations. While some paintings celebrated the wartime valor of the Russian people and dedication to rebuilding their nation, many focused on such mundane subjects as a child practicing at the piano, fishermen casting their nets, or a young woman playing the balalaika with the spirit that is so ingrained in the Russian psyche.

Despite the hardships and deprivations, these dissident artists preserved the traditions of Russian art and even managed to scale new heights of compositional elegance. Even today, their brushwork and palette are said to be dazzling by fine art connoisseurs. The paintings reflect the excellent training received by Russian artists with academic traditions dating back to such greats as Ilya Repin and Nicolai Fechin. Plein air techniques were often employed, which allowed the artists to capture glimpses of ordinary life quickly with a bold gusto that comes from working on site.

Not only did these artists preserve intimate portraits of a hidden world, many of them shared their passion, energy and strength with their students. I was very fortunate to have studied with some of these masters of Russian Impressionism during the latter Soviet years. Soon after I graduated from the Moscow Art University, the Soviet Union was dissolved. I was probably one of the last to receive the benefits of what is described as the West's last outstanding academic art education system.

The story of this collection is as extraordinary as are the artworks that inspired this book. For some 30 years, my father understood the intrinsic value of Soviet Impressionist works and the need to preserve these treasures of self-expression. As a leader of the Russian Union of Artists, he had the opportunity personally to know many leading artists from the 1940's through the 1960's and became a friend to many. Many of these Russian impressionist painters came to see my father, who was an official in the Moscow Union of Artists. He always admired their work and began to collect their paintings, covering the walls of our apartment to where we found ourselves living in a beautiful gallery. Later on, our home became a salon where the artists could drop by to discuss their work. My father felt privileged to be shown these secretive works that the artists produced not for exhibition, but as an expression of their love for Mother Russia and their thoughts of a kinder, gentler time. The state considered such art to be bourgeois, and essentially dangerous. My father said, "These 'portraits' of the nation's unfettered spirit must be preserved as an inspiration to future generations."

Over the years, the collection grew to more than 200 paintings representing the works of free enterprise and rising unemployment led many to look for any means of support. After a break-in at his studio in 1997, my father decided to send the art to me in America. Struck by the necessity to save these works from theft, vandalism, or destruction, I was stunned by their expressiveness and their daring.

The collection is very special to me because I grew up in the Russian art community, was formally trained from childhood and continued my education at the Art University in Moscow. This is why I feel a responsibility to be a bridge between this art, the artists, and the American people. Most importantly, I want Americans to recognize that even though the artists lived during a difficult era, they did not lose their spirit. Every painting in this collection has a glimmer of hope for the future as well as a quiet sense of joy. Despite hardships and even danger, these artists captured the desire for freedom on their canvases. The triumph of human spirit is evident in every golden image found on the pages of this book.

Elena Kohn



## CHAPTER ONE

*Amid a Gloomy Political Scene, a Golden Age Of Fine Art Emerges...*

Much has been written both before and after the 1991 demise of the Soviet era about the oppressive nature of this regime. Life was made so difficult for many artists, such as the ballet dancers Nureyev and Baryshnikov and the writer Solzhenitsyn, they chose to flee their native land.

While the new Russia strives to forget its totalitarian past, beneath the ruins of the former Soviet Union lays a golden cache of impressionist paintings encompassing the years 1940-1960. Existing side-by-side with art glorifying the “false gods” celebrated by the Soviet totalitarian regime, these works reflect mature artistic values and were created by some of the nation’s accomplished and talented artists. Defying state edicts and operating secretly, these Soviet painters were able to retain and redefine impressionism in a distinctly Russian manner.

Unfortunately, many critics in the West and even Russia have judged this art from a prejudiced ideological position. Judging from the increasing number of galleries, auction houses and museums, this situation is rapidly changing in the United States as well as Europe. Probably the vast geographic distance between Russia and America has helped the latter to be more objective and to recognize the quality of Soviet Impressionist art. Dr. Vern G. Swanson, one of the pioneers of discovering and introducing these works to the world community, suggested Soviet Impressionism represents the most important realist school of painting of the 20th century. Certainly the growing popularity of these works must be ascribed to the genuine quality of art as well as its Russian roots.

How this golden age of impressionism evolved, under the very noses of repressive leaders such as Stalin and Krushchev, is a fascinating story.



Fedor Glebov, *Whalers in Odessa Port*  
1950, oil on board, 13" x 13.75"

### **Socialist Realism becomes an artistic engine**

Before the establishment of the Soviet Regime, Russian art witnessed one of the liveliest periods of its history. The French influences of Art Nouveau and Cézanneism gave way to Russian-born Supremacist and Constructionist followed by the brilliant epoch of the avant-garde which placed Russia in the mainstream of world art. Numerous artistic associations enthusiastically competed both in the creation of new art forms and uncompromising rejections of the old.

However, the communist leaders soon realized that innovative, pluralistic and truly revolutionary avantgarde art concealed in itself dangerous individualism and a fierce sense of freedom, which cannot serve the collectivist ideology. As did other totalitarian countries of the time, official Soviet art turned to realism for its credo. Thus Socialist Realism, the Soviet incarnation of the classical/traditional/realistic styles, came into being.

The principles of this style can be traced to the 1930's when Stalin advocated total unification of Soviet cultural life. At the first All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934, Andrei Zhdanov, the cultural head of the Communist Party, proclaimed that principles extolled by Maxim Gorky in his writings must be the guidelines for proletarian art. In essence, the artist must portray life in its revolutionary development and adhere to a realistic form.

In its early manifestations, the Socialist Realism school chose the didactic and illustrative style of the Itinerants or Wanderers; a group of mid-19th artists whose works reflect the life of ordinary people while criticizing decadent monarchial society. Isaac Brodsky, with his huge chiaroscuro, beautifully executed paintings, is a characteristic figure of the pre-WWI revival of realism. Former Cezannists Aristarkh Lentulov and Ilya Mashkov, Supremacist Nadezhda Udaltsova as well as many other artists who stayed in the USSR also returned to traditional realistic painting.

However, by the 1950's, Soviet ideology demanded art must be easily comprehensible - no abstractions tolerated here! In an environment intent upon celebrating the proletarian way of life, there appeared to be no fertile soil in Russia for individual artistic experiment.

Yet art does not live by ideology alone. Art is always connected with the inner world of a human being; it always strives for something more. And so the strict, even hostile system of Soviet artistic institutions coexisted with a generation of artists, who after finishing commissioned government works, painted the life around them in an impressionistic style. These golden works reflect the beauty of the land and the strength of people after the terrors of the war, in which many male and female artists fought as soldiers.



Ardalion Kusmin, *Caspian Pier*, 1958, O/C, 9.75" x 21"

### **Impressionism: The new step in a proletarian culture?**

Russian artists of an advanced age often smile when they are told that Americans call their paintings Soviet Impressionism. In the official Soviet version of art history, the impressionist style associated with Claude Monet and other French artists who celebrated the hazy interplay of light and color had been criticized as nothing more than thoughtless reflections on meaningless bourgeois life. Harsh criticism, indeed, from the powers that be. However, the whole artistic education system and the style of painting from 1940-1960 had much more in common with western impressionism than the Soviets dared to admit. It was a synthesis of classical academism and impressionist color vision that produced the style which the Soviets called Socialist Realism and that the West increasingly refers to as Soviet Impressionism.

Yet one should not assume that this style is dedicated to subjects such as water lilies and boating parties. What makes Soviet Impressionism different from the western version is that the former was capable of satisfying the needs of the whole Soviet empire. For that reason alone, it was the last big and all-embracing official style in modern art history. When it came to subject matter, Soviet Impressionism embraced all of Russia. In terms of subject matter, these artworks didn't focus on the upper classes or demi-monde celebrated by Monet, Renoir and other French Impressionist icons.

Regardless of the communist ideas, which fed or were supposed to feed this style, the synthesis of classical academism and impressionism coupled with wide-ranging subject matter is responsible for the growing interest which commenced in the 1990's. The discovery of this mid-20th century Russian art by the Western world public can be compared to the discovery of an ancient civilization. In this instance, rather than digging in the sands of Egypt, the visual treasures were "excavated" from behind the Iron Curtain where they were sadly neglected by the post-communist Russian society.

In the mid-50's, Soviet art exhibited a style called Pleinairism by the critics in order to avoid the bourgeois term impressionism. The loose brushwork and intimate, lyrical character of these works indicated the search for emotional expressiveness. The search proved successful. It should be noted that many of these "Plein Air" paintings, confiscated from famous merchants and connoisseurs such as Schukin and Morozov after the 1917 Revolution, were on display in the Pushkin Museum of Fine Art and the State Tretiakov Gallery.

Young Russian artists perceived the impressionist style as the next logical step in the realization of a progressive proletarian culture. In an article written in 1958, Konstantin Yuon (1875-1958) stressed the importance of impressionism in the history of painting.



Fedor Konyakhin, *Portrait of a Sailor*  
1959, oil on canvas, 27.25" x 19.5"

*“Pictorial truth, which the first Impressionists had persistently searched for, allowed them to free their painting from many burdensome conventionalities. They elaborated a subtly differentiated approach to every phenomenon; found the way to clear, pure colors; discovered the methods of saturation of painting with the extreme power of light; the painting became colorful, radiant and joyful. That was their main achievement.”*

This encouragement activated many impressionist characteristics in subsequent works. The composition of canvases became movie-like fragments. Color emerged the main means of expression in rendering the mood or emotion of a scene. The artists began to paint the air as a substance that fills up space and may divide or unite the planes and the objects.

At the height of pleinairism, the Union of Artists converted a dacha in Crimea into a sort of painting resort. Arkady Plastov (1893-1972), one of the era’s cognoscenti, reckoned that the sun schematizes the color and that the real plein air style is possible in the middle Russia with

humble landscapes in dispersed silvery light. Executing rich harmonies in gray became a kind of test for a painter to be a skillful pleinairist. Moreover, by some critics, it was considered the style that truly reflected the Motherland’s modest, soft beauty. An embodiment of the Plein Air style preserved from the beginning of the century, Vitold Bialynitsky-Birulai (1872- (1957) painted subtle gray landscapes. Among his followers were the low-key colorists Yuriy Kugach (1917- ?), Andrei Bokov (1914-?) and Efrem Zverkov (1921-?). As one might expect, there also were those artists who fell in love with the Southern sun. A proponent of this distinctive Plein Air style was Moscow artist Nina Sergeeva (1921-?), a pupil of Igor Grabar (1871-1960) and Boris Sporykhin (1928-?). Friendly in his youth with Pyiotr Konchalovsky, Sporykhin learned a lot from that master of bold pastoso painting and rich-colored realism. Both branches of the plein air trend extended the limits of merely landscape painting and developed immediate communication with the surrounding world.

As one might expect in a country such as Russia, the rural theme quickly became popular. Representing the most characteristic features of Socialist Realism, sincere adoration for corpulent milkmaids, healthy shepherds and hard working tractor drivers is distinctly felt in the paintings. Though strenuously denied by the powers that be, the roots of this trend can be found in the late 19th century French art. Now hanging in the Pushkin Museum, Jules Bastien-Lepage’s (1848- 1884) marvelous genre canvas *The Country Love* was very popular with young art students. Emotional sincerity and compositional perfection combined with fresh illusionist brushwork seemed to be the best template for Soviet art of this period. Striving to achieve true



Dimitriy Shmelev, *Self Portrait*, 1968, O/C, 24" x 27"



Boris Sporkhin, *Don River*, 1958, O/C, 39.5" x 71"

reflections of the people's life (albeit preferring its sunny side), the artists chose a poetical approach linked with an emotional perception of the very atmosphere of rural life nature. Rendered in a vigorous dab-and-spot thick-paint manner animated by bright combinations of color reflexes, the paintings of Sporykhin are good examples of this style.

### **The working class enters the picture**

Since officially commissioned works had to be quite emotional and educational while inspiring and maintaining the viewer's high spirits, a certain degree of fabrication was demanded. Thus only a part of the creative arsenal could be impressionistic.

One of an artist's main tasks was to achieve typicality; to catch the spirit of the time by portraying the most characteristic representatives of the working class and peasantry. The relentless search for typicality resulted in a dilemma when preliminary studies and portraits drawn and painted from nature appeared much livelier than the final laborious studio work. Unfortunately, for the most part, Soviet museums and state galleries collected and exhibited mainly the works they purchased for ideological reasons. However, at the very time, art inspired by the real life, the history and the work of the people was very much alive and well. And so strong association with the proletariat came to be an important role of Soviet artists.

### **Portraits: Painting the common people**

Attention to the common man, preference for contemporary subjects, and the aforementioned search for typicality contributed to importance of portraiture among the other genres of Soviet painting. However, since ordinary citizens could not afford to commission a portrait, there were no traditional relationship between the model-commissioner and the artist. The work was usually a working study or a piece intended for public exhibition. Models could be the artist's close friends or picturesque people from the street typical enough for portraying. Labor heroes, who had to be glorified for their achievements while still remaining ordinary folk, were popular subjects. All relatively equal in social and financial terms, these people were always portrayed in a friendly and sympathetic manner.

A perfect example of this warm personal approach is Evgeny Charsky's (1919-1993) *Blockade Survivor*. The soft winter light emphasizes the paleness of a young woman's face against a window. Her fragile figure is a generalized image of many Leningrad citizens, who for almost three years tried to survive hunger and cold during the Nazi blockade. Those who lived bore the impact of the blockade terrors for many years after the war. The artist's distinctive pearly gray palette lends the painting a subtle melancholic mood without a trace of sentimentalism.

This approach is also epitomized by Charsky's Old Sailor; in terms of telling a story of a person's life, the painting gives new meaning to the saying "a picture is worth a thousand words". These works remain true to the tradition of the 19th century psychological portraiture developed by the Russian Itinerants. Note that Charsky employs pictorial achievements of his time making the texture vibrant and the colors airy, enjoying the effects of natural lighting.

For a contrast of styles, look at classically influenced Self-portrait by Dmitry Shmelyov (1918-1992) Depicting an elegantly dressed young man in front of a dark background, the painting focuses on the image's energy with spots of light illuminating the face with penetrating eyes and a hand firmly clutching a wide lapel of a well-tailored jacket. In terms of conveying the subject's personality, the perfectly painted masculine hand is no less important than the face. This exacting attention to eloquent details reflects the popularity of Old Masters such as Van Dyke and Rembrandt. The figure is radiant with boldness and self-assurance; this is the typical young man of the 50's, full of ambitious hopes and aspirations. Shmelyov's Self-portrait represents the spirit of the epoch; the profound sensation of dignity, purpose and great drive of a people, no matter how their Utopia finally ended up.

### **Landscapes: Immortalizing Mother Russia**

When addressing the subject of landscape painting, several artists illustrate the gradations existing within the impressionistic style. Boris Zworykin's (1928-) important canvas Don River View is a distillation of the artist's command of the genre. Sky meet water in a casual yet dramatic manner while the unabashedly impressionist brushstrokes and use of the palette knife in the foreground invites the viewer to "enter" the painting. With a single dramatic touch of red, the artist makes sure the eye finally alights on this visual interest highlight.

Sporykhin's experience in nature observation and special passion for sunlight let him preserve this sensation in genre compositions where the action is always placed under the open sky. In Native River Don, he paints cattle, villagers, buildings, boats, sky and water, even drying fish! Exercising plein air expressiveness to the fullest degree, Sporykhin captures the simple everyday joy of ordinary people living and working in the villages that he knew so well.

Mikhail Kamanin (1933 -) takes people and landscape themes one step further. In Seeing Off, he includes a seascape as well. Employing a loose impressionist style augmented by the effortless, vibrant composition, the painter captures a splendid rhythm of light and color tones. Gazing at this canvas, one can almost feel the wind as well as see it creating ripples on the water!

In contrast to the pluralistic themes celebrated by Sporykhin and Kamanin, Fyodor Glebov's (1914- 1980) work entitled In the Port focuses on a single dramatic subject. At first glance, Glebov's detailed studies of the port in his native Ukrainian town of Odessa is an example of careful documentation. However, it must be remembered that he was a pupil to Nikolai Krymov (1884-1958) and strictly followed the master's method of tints' depth correlations. This is the reason of the realistically convincing charm of the images; as if they are seen through some soft veil of salt-laden sea air. The gorgeous sight of the Steamship Karl Marx in the reconditioning dock reminds one of the definite photographs from the 1950's.

Seeking a new and different way of rendering movement, Fyodor Tregoub's (1924-) Girl Shurka Riding a Water-cask Carriage is composed in a manner reminiscent of a motion picture. Created in 1958, this painting beautifully illustrates cinematographically-influenced solutions. Zooming in close to the foreground, the artist captures the nuances of the cool evening riverside air, which is painted in violet by the last rays of sun. For a touch of red, a ribbon adorns the girl's straw hair. With just a few loosely painted basic planes, Tregoub achieves the sensation of space steadily sinking in twilight with an unfinished look.

The evolution towards unrestrained brushwork is evident in Flaying the Fish, an extremely colorful tiny cardboard painting by Sergei Tumakov (1912 -). This artist commenced his education with miniature painting and, after graduating from the Repin Institute, was known for exquisitely finished academic portraits.



The 1962 work demonstrates the newly mastered iridescent hues, broadly applied strokes chasing the fleeing shadows and sparks of light. Without hesitation, he paints blues over pinks and yellows, greens over browns and animates the scene with sunlit reds. In another even smaller work, *Evening on the Volga*, with only few touches Tumakov evokes a romantic, delicate mood which large, painstakingly composed paintings often strive for.

The lack of large-scale genre compositions on the Western market is due to the fact that they usually commissioned for museums and culture clubs. Or the works languish in moldy surroundings dictated by the impoverished treasuries of Ministry of Culture and the Artist's Union. Crippled by the lack of finances, these state establishments are neither able to widely exhibit nor authorized to sell their treasures.

However, the unfortunate fate suffered by the aforementioned works is compensated for by the lively compositional studies and drafts left in artists' studios. Sometimes these works are much more emotionally expressive than the final variants, which had to be approved by stern art councils. The culture "czars" often forced the artists to make changes that reflected communist ideas of moral and ideological correctness, which the following story dramatizes.

Between 1950-1960, the Kursk artist Tumakov painted a scene of workers, soldiers, and peasant delegates meeting with Lenin on a Smolny Palace staircase in Petrograd – the headquarters of the revolution. In the foreground, the artist showed a soldier smoking a hand-rolled cigarette. Because the art council decided it was not appropriate to smoke in front of the legendary Communist Party leader, the artist was forced to paint over what were probably the work's most characteristic and vivid personal touch!

While serving the country's history and heroic workdays of the people, the paintings discussed in this chapter reflected thoughts of artists about man's destiny and his emotional relationship to the world. A certain simplification of technique lent the images the charming boldness and fascinating spirit that documented the epoch. Most importantly, these works testify to the unbeatable creative spirit of the Russian artists, who despite living in a dark and forbidding political environment somehow managed to maintain their greatest natural treasures – the human heart and soul.



Fedor Tregoub, *Girl Shurka Riding Water-cask Carriage*, 1958, O/C, 24" x 44.5"





## CHAPTER TWO

*Russia's French Connection Becomes Redefined...*

### **Peter the Great and Catherine II: Opening Windows to the West**

More than 150 years before the Revolution of 1917, the prelude to Soviet domination that lasted half a century, Peter the Great and Catherine II opened Russia to European influence.

The first Russian prince to travel outside his country since 1075, Peter (1682-1725) considered contact with the West an integral part of his nation's reformation. Despite intense resistance from the boyars (nobles) and the clergy, the young czar took his court "on the road" in 1697. Adhering to a mind-boggling itinerary, he learned about a vast array of subjects ranging from surgery to politics.

Catherine II (1762-1796) was fascinated by the French philosophers of the Enlightenment; she corresponded regularly with Voltaire and received Diderot at the Russian court. As one might expect, the French language soon became the chosen vehicle for both conversation and correspondence among members of the nobility.

During Catherine's reign, Russian artists were exposed to superlative collections of Western art showcased at the famous Hermitage Museum. Travel abroad was made possible by the Academy of Art that the czarina founded.

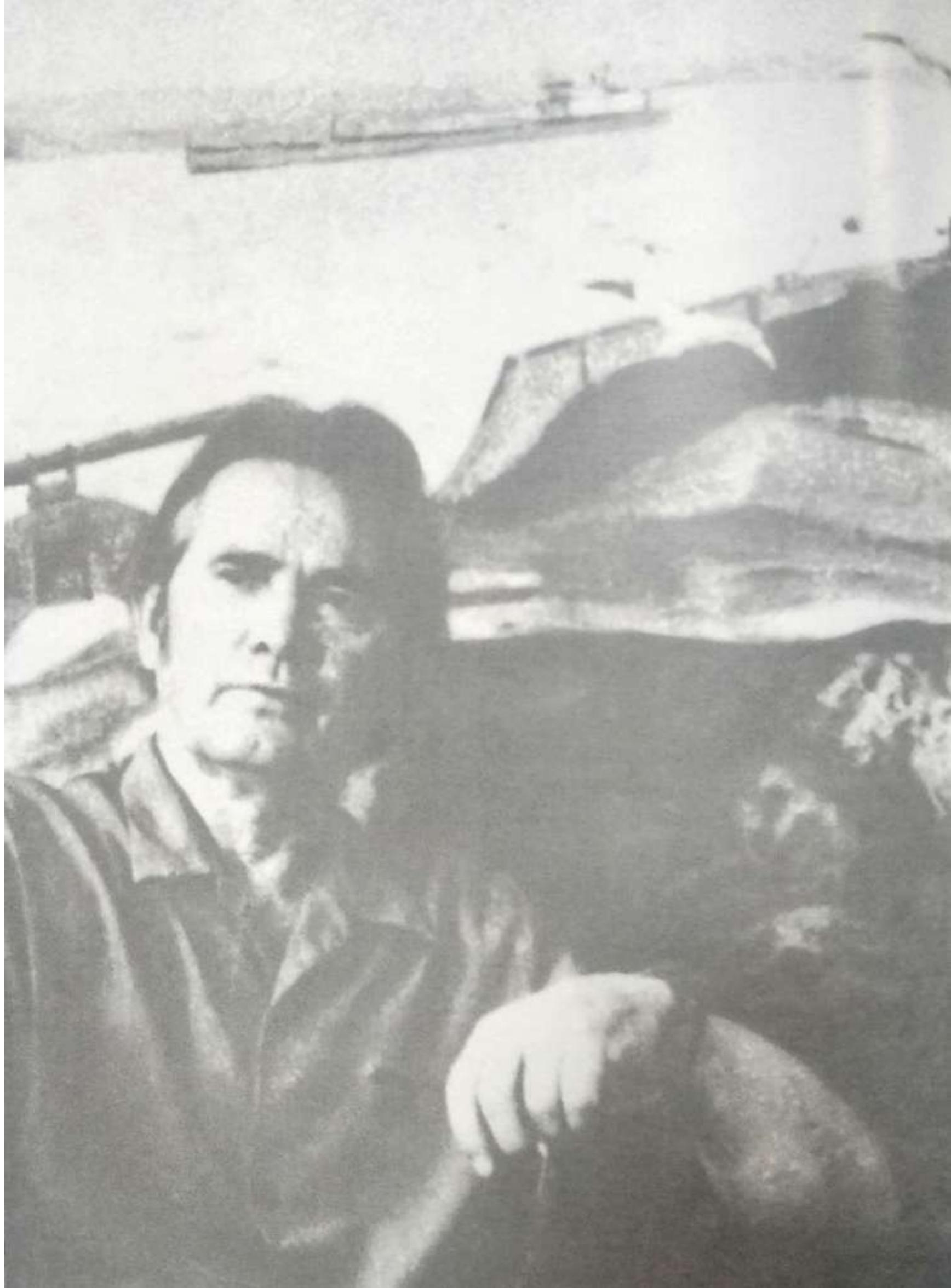
This kind of cultural exposure influenced the growing popularity of certain styles and attendant buying patterns in the future. Wealthy and sophisticated Russian patrons began to enthusiastically collect contemporary French paintings; for instance, Moscow merchants Morozov and Shchukin amassed fabulous collections of French Impressionist art in the early 1900's.

It should also be noted that Russia and France shared geopolitical issues vis-à-vis the military buildups and increasingly aggressive spirit of both Germany and Austria-Hungary. As a result, a defensive alliance, the French-Russian military pact, was ratified in 1893. From 1890 until the beginning of WWI in 1914, French investment capital helped underwrite the modernization of the Russian economy; there were more than 12,000 French nationals in the country and after the October Revolution of 1917, Paris became a magnet for Russian immigration. When the iron curtain began closing in the mid-30's, the suspension of cultural relations between the USSR and France began.

However, long before the French connection began to physically wither away, artists had taken different components of the impressionist style popularized during the 1870's and began to reinterpret them in a distinctly Viktor Krechetov, *Two Sisters* Russian manner.



Viktor Krechetov, *Two Sisters*  
1966, oil on canvas, 38.5" x 30.5"



## French vis-à-vis Russian Impressionism: Essentially a Study in Contrasts

Though enthusiastically accepting certain aspects of France's new artistic trend, Russian artists at the turn of the century never called themselves impressionists nor did the artists of the Soviet period. According to the official history of Russia, some artists in certain periods of creative activity were influenced, used some devices, admired certain achievements or were on the same "wavelength" as the French impressionists.

However, despite the emphatic official version, Russian artists did adopt the French Impressionists' "trademark" loose brushwork, liberal use of the palette knife, and dearth of laborious details. Safargaleev's charming Portrait of a Young Girl is a good example of this approach as is Globina's Debut, a work that reflects a strong influence of the French Impressionistic style.

However, when looking at later works in this chapter, it becomes apparent that the subject matter is often quite different. And this brings us to the most dramatic contrast between French and Russian versions of impressionism; the latter places a strong emphasis on love of the homeland and working class people. Reflecting the strength of social realism discussed in the previous chapter, this nationalistic subject matter ended up influencing the degree to which some French Impressionist techniques were adapted. Or, in certain instances, ignored by many Russian painters during the Soviet period.

### Subject matter influences technique:

While the French version of impressionism quickly acquired an international and cosmopolitan nature, from the very beginning the Russian interpretation was associated with nationalistic feelings.

The proliferation of impressionist landscapes during the Soviet era should not come as a surprise; after all, a rural landscape is a symbol of Mother Russia's vast spaces and inexhaustible human and natural treasures. Even though many Russian people worked in the cities between 1940-1960, rural life and the peasant continued to be regarded with great affection. The factory worker, an important symbol of the Soviet state, also became a favorite subject.

The intense agricultural and industrial expansion after WWII added new motifs to the artists' palette of ideas. Restored and newly built cities, as well as the improving life of the countryside, fed their imagination with powerful and youthful images. Paintings of ongoing construction, such as Motorin's energetic Construction Valentina Globina, Debut 1955, oil on canvas, 40" x 25" 18 Site, stands in stark contrast to Monet's romantic portraits of fabled international cities. (Compare the Motorin work with Monet's London or Venice paintings and you can see why Russian Impressionism is sometimes described as "masculine" while French Impressionism is labeled "feminine".)



Valentina Globina, *Debut*  
1955, oil on canvas, 40" x 25"



Boris Dyatlov, *Rural Fair*, 1952, O/C, 17" x 27"

The French Impressionists' emphasis on the interplay of light and reflections dictated or certainly influenced their choice of subjects, such as shimmering water, glittering theatre scenes, and light-filled gardens. "The depiction of the air... was the main path along which we instinctively went," said Camille Pissarro (1830 - 1903), discussing the main tenet of impressionism. The relentless search for optical effects led the French to a resolution of color bordering on the scientific, the analysis of spectral contrasts, and a sensible expression of air and light vibrations. Any factor that did not contribute to the fulfillment of this major task was either ignored or eliminated altogether; for instance, narrative subject matter, built-up composition, and domination of drawing over color were no longer considered of great importance.

Russian Impressionists of the Soviet Era adhered to a different credo. They preserved the significance of the subject (which was more or less nationalistic), the personal attitude towards people and events portrayed, the rules of composition, and the dramatic effects of light and shade. Impressionist devices, which led to diffusion of items in the light, or division of color into spectral points, remained alien to them. In the opinion of these artists, shape must never be sacrificed in favor of any optical effect. Technically accomplished brushwork and complex colors achieved by properly mixed paints were the masterful elements that enabled an artist to "plaster" or "cast" the shape with color.

Considering themselves heirs of the world's art traditions, the Russians trusted the colorist theory derived from Eugene Delacroix (1798 - 1863) and even earlier - from Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519). As a result, the French Impressionists were considered a breed of extremists, who saw and painted air surrounding the objects, while tradition prescribes to see and paint objects surrounded by air.

### **Different Approaches to Time and Effort**

In the opinion of the Soviet Era artists, laborious hours spent in front of an easel didn't necessarily result in dazzling technical proficiency; to their mind, the minimum of brushstrokes demonstrated the maximum mastery. On the other hand, many French Impressionists believed that the harder and longer the effort, the fresher the final look of the painting. This relentless pursuit of the illusionist unity of the whole often involved viewing nature through a screwed up eye from the longest possible distance. (Legend has it that one of Renoir's eyes became narrowed because of his constant and often strained viewing of nature.) Not to mention the scraping off and correcting of the paint again and again and again.

Of course, Russian artists didn't work speedily in terms of producing "of the moment" paintings. (Nor was this was this characteristic of France's Old Masters; it became a popular idea of impressionism later on.) Studies consisting of a single session could rarely be considered self-sufficient works of art but rather as material for future paintings.



Ekaterina Belykova, *An Officer and a Lady*  
1950, oil on board, 23" x 16"

### **Academic Proponents of Impressionism**

Had it not been touted by the older generation of Russian teachers, impressionism may not have seen the light of day. Either completely or partially adhering to certain impressionist principles, those masters -- including Konstantin Korovin, Igor Grabar, Konstantin Yuon, Sergei Gerasimov, Alexander Gerasimov and Nikolai Krymov -- dominated the education of Russian artists who were producing during the 1950's and 1960's. The pictorial and visual principles taught by these elders replaced the need for individual searches and impressions on the part of their students. (Of course, the teachers also stressed reverence towards the Old Masters, who knew everything and had attained perfection.) This interpretation of impressionism should not come as a surprise - it is typical of the traditionalist and collectivist way of thinking.

### **Combining Fundamentalism with Flexibility**

Seeking a compromise that allowed them to stay politically correct while not totally ignoring western art influences, Soviet artists vacillated between academic fundamentalism and impressionist flexibility. Creating their own unique interpretation of impressionism, these artists came into their own. And so, with few exceptions, slavish attempts at imitating French Impressionists are non-existent. As many of the following images dramatize, the positive and fruitful effects of impressionism for Russian painters were the enthusiastic spirit of fidelity to nature and the attendant enjoyment of its visual pleasures. This gave the artists a certain degree of freedom without the need to strictly follow any model - French or otherwise.

However, it should be noted that this freedom could be severely curtailed if Soviet leaders saw fit. Some of the limitations and easing of artistic freedom under Stalin and Krushchev are discussed in the next chapter.



Fedor Konyakhin, *On the Dacha*, 1962, O/C, 31.5" x 18.5"

### **A Gallery of Russian Impressionists: Celebrating a new thematic palette**

A preliminary sketch for a historic composition about WWI and the Russian Revolution, Ekaterina Beliakova's (1905-1980) *Study of an Officer and a Lady* directs considerable sarcasm towards the personages who represented bourgeois society. The artist exploits the contrast between the officer's grin and the lady's cool yet coquettish expression to the fullest degree. Parading the theatrical nature of these two, Beliakova focuses on the shine of the epaulettes and the elegance of the uniform as well as the woman's hairdo, muff, gloves and purse. Reflecting extensive research on the images and fashions of that epoch, this sketch remains somewhat of a mystery. Was the final composition ever painted? If so, where is it now?

Although Valentina Globina's (1920-1999) paintings also fall into the story-telling mode, unlike Charsky, she captures her subjects in movement or some joyful moments of their lives. Ranging from picturesque village girls and babushkas in folk dresses to ballet dancers and singers on stage, they offer the viewer both physical beauty and emotional intimacy. Globina's masterpiece, *Début* sums up the character of the subject with an inspired visual scenario – a somewhat shy, girl who has sung in public for the first time and now leaves the stage flushed with success and self confidence. Globina's color vision allows her to unite the outbursts of brushstrokes into a softly harmonized chromatic range. Paintings such as *Début* are dramatic examples of why generic impressionist terminology is so applicable to this era of Soviet art.

Possibly depicting some northern town in the region of Vologda, Boris Dyatlov (1924-1990) combines the best features of a studio composition and a nature study in *Rural Scene*. The subtle plein air nuances and rich colors are enhanced by the well-arranged, positioned and balanced components and details. The viewer's eye first observes the foreground from left to right, flows along the footpath along the spatial depth to the background, and returns for a closer look at the peasant's carriage in the work's lower edge. With their vivid and picturesque motifs, provincial marketplaces were a favorite theme for Realist artists. Reminiscent of earlier pre-Revolutionary works by Arkhipov or Youn, Dyatlov captured the Northern Province life that remained unchanged for centuries even during Soviet times.

Reflecting new trends evident in the work of younger Soviet artists during the late 1950's, Viktor Krechetov's (1932-) *Sisters* exemplifies the search for sharpened decorative and expressive effects, which eventually led to the transformation of the whole style. Bold and effective composition of white, red and black is enhanced by a daringly cut background as well as the silhouettes of the girls' figures and the attendant shadows. The dramatic difference between the two sister's personas is brilliantly conveyed to the viewer; the first sister is thin, energetic and serious while the second is depicted as corpulent, easy going with a kind, open face. These differences are also played up by tonal gradations that divide the positions of the figures; the sister in black stands closer to the viewer and thus her face are lighted more intensely. The soft shades and merging of brushstrokes interwoven with diversity of hues are typical of the traditional Impressionist approach and its intense search for nuances.

Like many young Soviet artists, Aleksei Motorin's (1924 -) studies were interrupted by WWII. He eventually settled in Ulianovsky, where he was stationed and proceeded to celebrate that new city's energy and tremendous growth on canvas. Typical of the painter's oeuvre is *Construction Site*; while the work focuses on machinery and a work in progress, it has a romantic mood. (At first glance, the machinery resembles the Eiffel Tower!) The upward thrust of the machinery, enhanced by the expressive impressionist brushwork and cheerful palette, conveys the feeling of a hopeful future.

Like many of his contemporaries, the studies of Grigori Kravchenko (1930-) were also interrupted by WWII. Though five long years of enlistment took him to many Soviet Union regions, he favored remote areas of the Volga. Here Kravchenko found the people who inspired such awesome portraits as the unforgettable *Young Girl*. Brave and energetic, tempered by heavy responsibilities and risky duties, his subjects are brave, energetic and anything but passive. The profound intellectual depth reflected by the eyes in the portrait could only be captured by a painter of equally profound talent.

An outstanding plein air painter, Fedor Glebov (1914- 1980) masterfully renders the effect of dispersed and fading daylight in *At a Dacha*. The tranquil atmosphere at the day's end in the countryside is captured by cool, pearly hues. The abandoned chair in the foreground starts the "countdown" of the fine tonal differences that depend on the objects' distances. As twilight closes in, the reds became a little more violet and somewhat blurred while the bluish tints play more intensely on the green foliage and grass. The lamp and upper windows are slightly (and invitingly) illuminated. Thanks to the artist's feel for nature, this small study is an intimate genre painting conveying a sense of peace and harmony.

Ivan Kotsarev (1925-) received his artistic education at the Studio of the War Veterans organized for disabled painters by famous painters



Gregory Kotsarev, *Summer Bouquet*, 1959, O/B, 17.5" x 19"



Aleksey Motorin, *On the Construction Site*  
1953, O/B, 14.25" x 19.5"

such as K. Yuon. Inspired by iconic impressionist figures, he became a recognized master of still lifes and landscapes. Celebrating the beauty and joy of everyday objects, *Summer Bouquet* is characterized by the impressionist style "signatures" of dynamic brushstrokes and a bold palette.

Recognized as a master of realistic genre and landscape painting, Kamil Safargaleev (1928-1999) is most famous for his portraits of children. His subtle orchestrations of color and light explore the story behind the face. Nowhere is this more evident than *Portrait of a Young Girl*. Is she happy, argumentative or simply perplexed? Embracing the changing moods of adolescent storms, Safargaleev immediately draws the viewer into the sensitive world inhabited by a child.

Little wonder that his paintings have been collected by major Russian museums for decades.





## CHAPTER THREE

*Through Post-war Clouds, Rays Of Golden Sunlight Appear...*

The famous Russian writer Maxim Gorky once said that there are people who “carry the sun in their blood”. One could certainly not find a more apt description of the young woman who dominates Sergei Glushkov’s painting entitled *Spring is Coming*. Bathed in streaming sunlight and holding a vase of flowers, she epitomizes a welcome change in the seasons. Painted in 1960, the work reflects the more relaxed artistic environment that eventually followed the grim post-war years dominated by artistic witch-hunts.



Semion Skoptsov, *Sleepless Nights*  
1958, oil on canvas, 56" x 26"

### Impact of World War II on The Soviet Union

The impact of World War II on the Soviet people cannot be overstated. More than 10,000,000 citizens were lost during “the Great Patriotic War”, a larger number of casualties than suffered by any other nationality. Nazi forces took over the wealthiest part of the Soviet Union...the infrastructure of farms and factories were destroyed... generations of women were robbed of fathers, sons, and husbands.

Art students were among those who fought the Nazis including Aleksei Prokopenko, Boris Dyatlov and Pyotr Andrianov. As one might expect, many post-war paintings were devoted to an exploration of wartime valor and resolve as well as grief and despair.

In *Sleepless Nights*, Semen Skoptsov (1917-1998) depicted in the most sincere and convincing way the hard nights endured at a wartime hospital, a nurse by the bed of a severely wounded soldier at the break of dawn, another soldier by the window listening to the frontier cannonade. This typically impressionist fragmented composition is developed vertically and with depth. One sees just a piece of the window, a bed corner, and the dim white nurse’s robe in the center. Reflecting the severity of the subject matter, Skoptsov proves to be a true master of color, saturating the seemingly almost black-and-white painting with the interplay of cool light and complex deep shadows. Rich impasto brushwork also adds to the drama of the scene. One can only guess how many sleepless nights this master spent studying the early morning light when semi-tones are bright blue and violet and white cloth must be painted with dark colors.

One of the main virtues of Vladimir Kudryashov’s (1929-) painting entitled *1941* is the depiction of a time when Nazi troops were approaching Moscow and battlefield news was grim. It is an emotional drama achieved without affectation. A sense of grief and foreboding are delicately rendered with an admirable simplicity of manner. Freezing cold light comes through a window crossed with paper straps to avoid glass cracking from bomb explosions. In the ascetic interior of a room, one can see the rigid figure of an elderly woman whose image reflects worry

and strength at the same time. At a closer look, the perfectly harmonized, almost monochromatic color range reveals the richness of hues ranging from ochre and umber to soft pink and blue. With great mastery, the artist explores intense counter-light in which the details melt and silhouettes become more expressive. Sidelights boost the careful volume modeling and make the shadows transparent and airy. Reminiscent of Whistler's gray works, this strikingly realistic painting is obviously influenced by the northern version of the impressionist tradition.

Set in a small, rural village, the painting entitled *Tired* visually engulfs one with a sense of weariness and loss. (One can only wonder how

many family members has this poor woman lost during the dreadful war years?) A dark palette combined with bold brushstrokes and a dramatic use of the palette knife by the artist, Klavdiya Balanova (1915-), creates a formidable viewing experience. A mood of despair is lightened by light behind the woman, implying a ray of hope. Gaining fame for her award-winning work entitled *First Revolutionaries in Russia*, Balanova completed only 13 major paintings during her career.

Focusing on a young pioneer scout (a popular figure during the Stalin Era) the painting *Pioneer* by Len Victor (1914-1978) initially puzzles the viewer. Why is this youth facing in the opposite direction? What is he looking at in the distance? By focusing on a vague yet light-infused background, the painter would appear to be implying the anticipation of change, looking towards the future. Despite the fact that he was flirting with some rather dangerous subject matter in this painting, Len Victor ended up being elected Honorary Artist of Russia in 1969.

Executed with a strong sense of composition and masterful figurative 27 depictions in the best social realism manner, *Return to Service* also encompasses a strong impressionistic background. Combining light and shadows with a palette of cheerful blue and green, Boris Sporykhin is able to impart a feeling of hope to the viewer. This sense of future victory exemplified by this canvas is strengthened by the positive expressions and energetic interaction between the military personnel depicted.



Klavdiya Balanova, *Tired*, 1957, O/C, 36.5" x 26.25"

### Impressionism Becomes a Cultural Target

Joseph Stalin had recognized Socialist Realism as the only "art of the people" from the very beginning. During the purges of the mid to late 30's, artists who did not conform to the approved



Viktor Len (1914-1978), *Pioneer*  
1950, oil on canvas, 19" x 14.25"



Fedor Konyakhin, *Portrait of a Young Girl with Accordion*  
1960, O/C, 24" x 29.5"

style were considered dissidents and subject to imprisonment or even death. Those unfortunate enough not to emigrate or join governmental artists' unions were forced to go underground. Unable to participate in any exhibitions lest they be condemned to a gulag, these artists literally buried their work in obscurity.

As often happens during wartime, the existing political scene after 1941 took on a xenophobic tinge in Soviet Russia. Western influences were regarded with even greater disdain and, as a result, impressionism became a popular target.

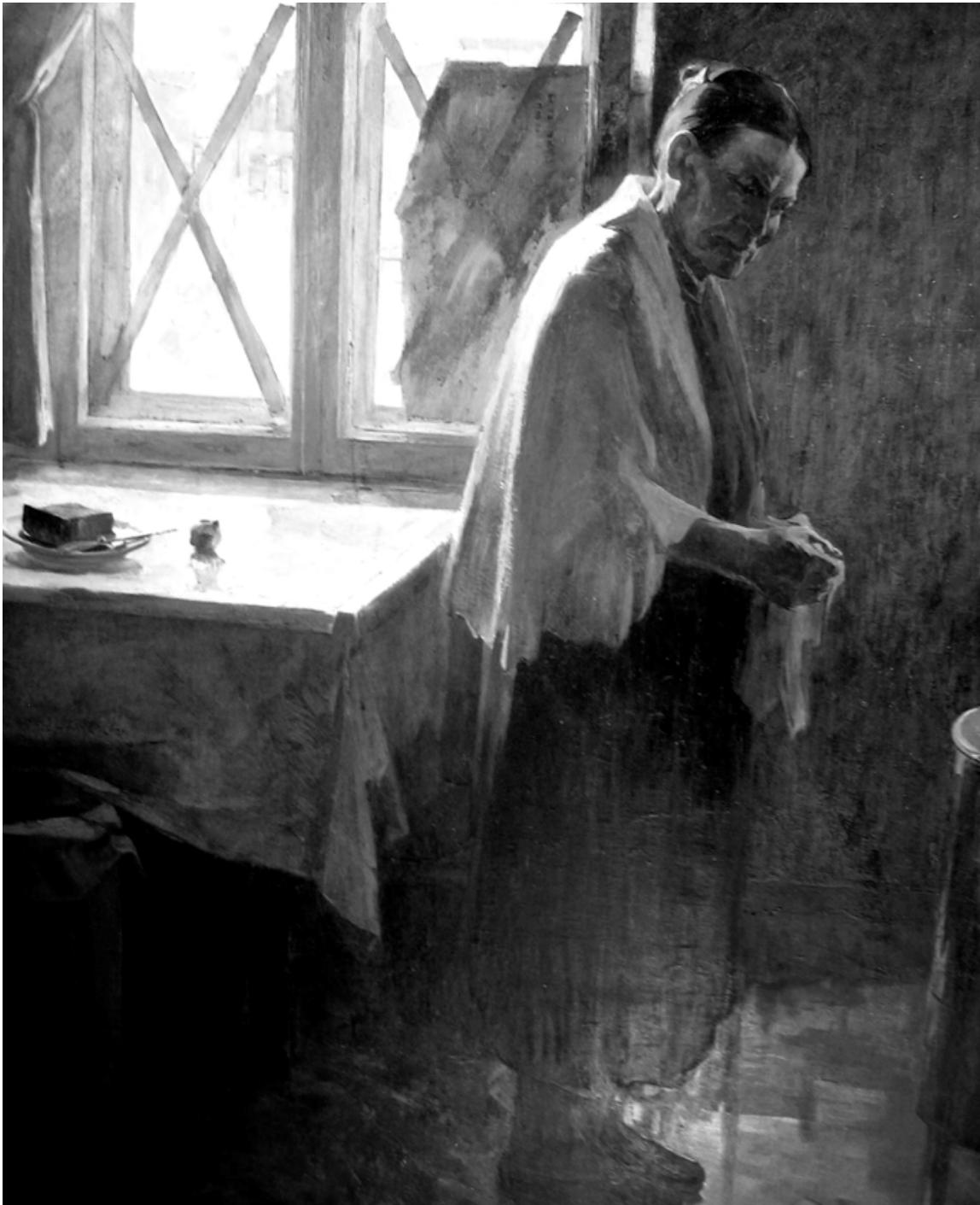
The courage of those "underground" artists who continued to paint in an impressionist style cannot be exaggerated. They often took menial jobs during the day that allowed them to paint at night behind closed doors. These artists painted with human and/or horsehair when brushes worn out. They pieced scraps of canvas together. If discovered practicing this forbidden art form, they could be shipped off to work camps or even placed in mental institutions.

Even members of elite art circles were experiencing difficulties during the war years. Impressionism enthusiasts such Aleksander Gerasimo, head of the Moscow Art Academy, and Igor Grabar, head of the visual arts section of the Stalin Prize Committee, were forced to publicly criticize this style. Governmental hostility increased during the post war years; the fabulous Museum of New Western Art, which housed a priceless collection of impressionist art, was closed down in 1948.

### The Picture Begins to Brighten....

With the advent of Nikita Khrushchev in 1957, the new leader of the Communist Party, the stifling artistic constraints described above began to loosen. Denouncing the cult of Stalin's personality and his abuses of power, Khrushchev brought about the period known as the Thaw, which led to greater liberties for artists.





Veniamin Kudryashov, *1941, 1965, O/C, 64" x 52"*

joy – is conveyed amazingly enough with a somewhat somber palette. Broad areas of color applied with a palette knife, the sparkling musical instrument, and a single lock of hair pulling the eye down to a somewhat mysterious smile – all contribute to an impressionist masterpiece that captures the immediacy of the moment.

Generous subsidies from the State offered the freedom to work for art's sake and feelings of patriotism and renewed hope were soon translated into paintings. (Interestingly enough, the isolation from the West coupled with governmental financial support had positive fallout. Not having to obey the capriciousness of market forces and private commissions, artists were able to explore their own painterly inclinations undisturbed.)

Capturing an intense feeling of joy, *Spring is Coming* by Sergei Glushkov (1914-1985) reflects the new found relaxation experienced by artists after the demise of Stalin. Sitting by an open window with sunlight streaming in and a bouquet in her hand, the smiling woman invites you into her world. The dramatic contrast between the shadowy interior and light-filled exterior combine with a bold palette and expressive brushstrokes to convey a strong sense of change.

In *Early Spring*, Pyotr Andrianov (1916-1979) concentrates on the precise definition of three major tonal planes, the snow-covered ground, the forest, and the sky. The brook divides the foreground into two spatial zones, which creates the illusion of perspective that is also enhanced by tonal relations. However, color is the main "hero" of this painting. The palette is rich with harmoniously united hues, soft pink and yellow in the light areas, blue and violet in the shadows. The early spring light is low and gentle. Watery vapors render the air crystal clear and deepen the chromatic intensity. With airy shades, the artist has captured the moist transparent lace of snow melting on branches.

Influenced by such great Russian painters as Repin and Surikov, Fyodor Konyakhin (1923-) celebrated the new sense of freedom with his infectious painting entitled *Girl with Accordion*. The keynote of this work – a feeling of



Pyotr Andrianov, *Early Spring*, 1960, O/C, 50" x 38"

Glushkov, Andrianov, and Konyakhin and other impressionist painters courageous enough to withstand years of governmental intimidation were finally able to practice their art with greater freedom. By "retaining the sun in their blood", as Gorky said, they created a golden age of impressionism. As some critics have pointed out, the post World War II years witnessed the flowering of the empirical impressionist tradition. A movement that was ardently celebrated by the many members of the Soviet art schools.





## CHAPTER FOUR

### *Soviet Art Education: A World-class Creative Incubator*

Engaged in world-scale confrontation with the West since the First World War, the regime needed consummate professionals in every field. Thus, teaching was designed to produce experts for propaganda purposes as well as for the sake of science and art. Obsessed with the race to “overtake and outstrip” the West, those involved in industrial and technical fields looked outside Russia for examples to emulate. Artists, on the other hand, had outstanding domestic role models in the painters and sculptors who became teachers. This condition was not unique to the Soviet regime. As far back as pre-revolutionary times, a teacher’s influence and his personal achievements remained the strongest factors in the process of artistic education.

Soviet officials placed a lot of credence in their system of art education. According to Gerasimov, a highly acclaimed professional artist of the period who was devoted to the Communist system, “Soviet art will eclipse even the most outstanding epochs of art in the past with its strength and brilliance.”

The State Art Institute, founded in Moscow, was named after the Russian realist painter Vasily Surikov. Igor Grabar was its first rector, and he did a masterful job of developing the standards of the Surikov Institute. This Impressionist painter had a highly diverse background in the arts. He established the branch of scientific conservation and restoration of ancient painting in Russia, discovered old icons and murals, ran museums and exhibitions while at the same time managing to please Joseph Stalin demands regarding the arts. Along with the Repin Institute in Leningrad, the Surikov Institute became the main training center for the artists who contributed to the Soviet Union’s art industry. Graduates from the Penza Art School, well known for teaching the initial fundamentals of realism, were always welcomed into these prestigious institutions of higher study in the Soviet Union. Other important art schools included the Stroganov Higher Art-Industrial School and the Institute of Decorative and Applied Arts.

In the visual arts, it was the Academy of Fine Arts, created in 1947. The former Academy, founded by Catherine the Great in 1757, was closed after the October 1917 Revolution. Only the elite of the Soviet art world became members of the academy, with just 45 full-time and 25 corresponding members permitted at any given time. The organization was responsible for enforcing the state’s standards for artistic development and education. The words of Sergei Gerasimov reflected these goals: “The best artists are forwards in the column of mankind marching towards the progress. The best works of fine arts are outposts of the bright future. Since ancient times the real art strives to introduce a man to a better world, to contribute to his improvement, to arouse the lofty feelings.”



Viktor Nikolsky, *Male Model*, 1950, pencil on paper

## Historic Role Models Who Influenced Generations to Come

Ilya Repin (1844-1930), a professor at the Imperial Academy of Arts, is a good example of an influential teacher. Though he was hardly considered an ideal schoolmaster by his colleagues, young people from all over the country dreamt of becoming his students. Repin, as reported, did not offer any straight pedagogical theory to the numerous important and original painters who studied under him. Rather, his works made him an icon of realist art and attracted an impressive following that his colleagues envied.



Usachev E., *Young Male Model*, 1950, pencil on paper, 33" x 22"

Konstantin Korovin (1861-1939) was another teacher who influenced a substantial number of artists that came into their own during the beginning of the 20th century. Vasily Yakovlev, an outstanding master of the Soviet period described Korovin's way of teaching, "Korovin seldom appeared in the class. Nice-looking, well dressed, he entered the studio with the scent of expensive perfume and cigars in his wake. Lounging in a chair, benevolently looking around at the surrounding crowd of excited admirers, he talked about art and, with his bright wit, communicated the love for painting to the pupils. He went into raptures over the French painters, and the superficial cold light of fashionable impressionism warmed up the souls of the young men. The path of least resistance was found, which provided easy success, and the credulous young artists rushed to share their master's assessment..."

The following dialogue between Korovin and Yakovlev offers a fascinating glimpse at two diametrically opposed viewpoints. It should be noted that favoring the Old Masters as proponents of realist art hallowed by tradition became more fashionable among many academics after 1920.

"Look, Yakovlev, the model is as if burning, and how do you paint her?"

"What do you mean, burning, Konstantin Alexeyevich? I humbly must object. And how can the model be burning in our gray studio on a misty November day? She appears to me rather grayish-pearly in shadows and only slightly pink in lights..."

"Just paint brighter," said Korovin.

"Forget about the form, color is supreme! "But besides the color, I see the drawing, and silhouette, and form," replies Yakovlev, continuing to resist. "Well, Rubens's 'Andromeda'..."

"What?" exclaims Korovin.

"Forget about those Old Masters. They are just black holes in gold frames. I have seen how Sisley painted!"

Before he emigrated after the Revolution, Korovin taught in Moscow for a brief period of time. While many artists counted themselves among his pupils, most of the time he hardly knew they were there. However, there was an artist, whom aside from being one of the master's most talented followers, made important contributions to the education of the post-war generation.

That man was Sergei Gerasimov (1895-1964) and his studio was the bright light of the Surikov Institute during the mid-1900's. The artist himself sorted out the avalanche of students who applied, and many of the lucky few chosen became well-known Soviet painters. Rather than the traditional sequence of mastering skills before attempting to create a painting, Gerasimov's pedagogical system offered a student a vivid mixture of educational and creative tasks. While his aphorisms may seem banal at first glance, they reflected this teacher's proclivity to render art education democratic and, at the same time, to avoid imitation, secret devices, and mannerisms.

*"Don't miss the form, don't overestimate the form, do it the best you can. Ah, that... ala, ala, just do it close to the matter, only to the matter,"* said Gerasimov. And in the class, when the students tried to paint looking over the shoulders of their betters, he said in a humorous vein, *"Please, paint independently, yes, only independently. Only one of you can be talented, not all twenty."*

## **The Rigorous Demands of Academicism**

Despite the tendencies of some art teachers to emphasize a democratic approach and encourage independence in the classroom, the mastering of basic academic requirements remained paramount. These pedagogues were obliged to guarantee the high professional level of their pupils. Addressing those who railed against "barren academicism" without replacing it with an equally successful formula for mastering technical proficiency, Vasily Yakovlev, in 1949 when he was an Academy of Arts professor, said

*"You ask what are the methods of teaching the realist art? I warn that I am going to set forth my personal opinion on that matter, which has undergone different misinterpretations for the last half a century. In most instances, these misinterpretations have masked complete ignorance, unwillingness for serious study, or different formalist grimaces."*

## **Drawing: "Without Excellent Mastering of Drawing, You Will Never Become a Painter."**

The proponents of academic neglect forgot that different schools of thought exist within this discipline. Not to mention that such stellar artists as Alexander Ivanov, and Repin, and Surikov, and Polenov came from the Academy. While academicism was not the "alpha and omega" of scholastic habits, the great cultural strength of this tradition, which successively linked the classical epochs with newer schools of painting, could not be denied. It is only necessary to make the right selection of academic offerings, one of the greatest of these being mastery of drawing. The mastery of realist drawing demanded that one capture on paper or on canvas the truest depiction of the object; i.e., it would observe all the rules of inner construction and perspective and be free of distortion.

When drawing a male model, he had to be depicted in a manner that encompassed character, likeness, and exact proportions as well as all the demands of anatomy, form modeling, volume, and chiaroscuro. And if the portrayed model's eyes were looking lively and expressive, then they had better be drawn lively and expressive. Such an achievement was not considered a reflection of the naturalism style, but rather it was included in the requirements of elementary drawing literacy.

The deep and clever analysis of the laws governing an object's inner construction included a comprehensive knowledge of anatomy and perspective. All of these aspects were considered as a part of the concept of drawing.

It did not matter if the chosen medium charcoal, pencil, or crayon, or if the individual hand was shaky or assured, while artistic mediums and talent levels were different, the basic tenets of drawing remained the same.

So how did the best artists learn to draw? In the beginning, they worked on the simplest forms and then proceeded to the more complex.

As one might expect, the degree of comprehension and mastering of tasks determined progress. Students drew geometric objects, ornaments, plaster casts of body parts, and plaster heads. In rigid colorless forms, they studied chiaroscuro and rules of construction. After drawing the most basic forms, students graduated to the mastery of colors. Becoming adept at portraying the plaster head, they proceeded to drawing a live one, a challenging task that involved much protracted studying. Next came the depiction of a dressed torso, which involved the study the folding or draping of cloth. Only after mastering the depiction of draperies and folded material perfectly, was a pupil allowed to attempt drawing a nude person's figure.

The question was and continues to be asked, how does one successfully draw a naked human body? It is the most complicated, multiform phenomenon of nature. Drawing the human form is as demanding as a technical vocabulary of foreshortenings, turns, expression, character, movements and poses. It also involves knowledge of diverse and complicated human anatomy. The artist who achieves this feat understands the very nature of drawing. This achievement can only come as a result of thoughtful labor, systematic studying, great love, and the development of professional skills.

Russia's impressionist painters and more traditional artists both recognized the fundamental importance of academic drawing. Abram Arkhipov (1862-1930), who taught in Moscow until 1924, used to say to his pupils, "If you can not draw well, you'd better not paint with colors. Without excellent mastering of drawing, you will never become a painter."

With regard to the importance of developing the skills of drawing, proponents of the impressionist style unanimously joined the adherents of academicism whose pedagogical doctrine was best expressed by the words by Isaac Brodsky (1884-1939). "To base one's oeuvres on color alone, without form, this is an easy way available for all those with mediocre abilities. They think this is a recipe that can be understood at once. Unfortunately, these young people easily fail, because one cannot master the heights of art relying only on color without



Skubko-Karpas L., *Lala*  
1954, pencil on paper, 5" x 5"

technical knowledge, without form and strict drawing.”

Brodsky’s most frequent sayings to students elaborate on what he deemed a “formula” for success.

*“Get yourself a store of small brushes and big patience. Calmness and concentration are very important for work. And don’t wipe your brushes off on your clothes! I value completed, finely made paintings instead of brightly dyed canvases. In the correct and sensible combinations of light and shade, tones and semi-tones, I see more painting here than in brightness of colors, which many prefer. It is possible to achieve a real painterly result with only three colors, if to balance correctly the relation of tones, light and shade.”*

From the very beginning, training a student to correctly see visual relations and dimensions was a basic tenet of Soviet art education. The unconditional observance of visual likeness was also considered a remedy against “formalist” distortions and exaggerations. However, that was not to be interpreted as a demand for photographic likeness. Teachers always warned their students against “blind copying” of nature. Realism was opposed to naturalism in the sense that the former achieved true likeness thru the knowledge of a depicted object’s inner construction as well as rules of color transformations in the conditions of lighting, and proper selection of important and unnecessary details.

Alexander Gerasimov (1881-1963), another famous pupil of Korovin, bearing the same surname as Sergei, said shortly before his death the following about classical portraiture’s ability to achieve true likeness:

*“The great masters reveal the sharpest characterization of man in the works. Classical portraits, which we so admire and continually study, are artistic and vivid not only because they personalize the types, characters and style of the bygone epochs, but also because of their astonishing verisimilitude. The portraits of the same person made by different artists confirm this ability. In spite of distinctions of manner and technique, they convey the model’s likeness perfectly. Portraits by great world artists such as Velasquez, Van-Dyke, Rembrandt, Frans Hals render the subtlest of likenesses, embodying all the individual and typical peculiarities of their subject. And in fact, it is impossible to “hook out” the inner physiological image without rendering the outer features, without their harmony. After all, what is the character of a man’s portrait without expression of his face’s details, hands, the entire figure, without the sharpness of this visual correspondence?”*

## **Capturing the Image: Different Theoretical Points of View**

The previously noted “follow me” way of teaching by no means indicated a lack of theory. One popular point of view was somewhat ironically ascribed to the academics, and emphasized maximum attention be paid to detail from the very beginning. They did not reject a generalized viewpoint; however, it would be developed mentally without the underlying draft traces on paper or canvas. The image must always be kept clear, elaborated with fine accurate strokes as if engraving the form. The contour or the line was regarded as one of the most expressive means for allowing the rendering of spatial effect with its thinness, thickness, tension, or laxity.

The followers of Pavel Tchistyakov (1831–1919) believed in a generalized approach, which was summed up by the master’s phrase “When you draw the eye, look at the ear.” This visual approach to an object embraced understanding the unity of simple forms, and only after achieving that would the artist focus on detail.

Dmitry Kardovsky, who ran his own Moscow studio of realist drawing and painting during the 1920’s and 1930’s, effectively presented the system of Tchistyakov. The artist was also influenced by his studies with Anton Aschbe at the latter’s studio in Munich. The whole system of Kardovsky’s teaching concentrated on the drawing of a human head, involving all the elements of graphical constructing of the three-dimensional form on a plane. These elements were the big form, the big line and tone. Kardovsky said, “The last conclusive moment of my comprehension of these rules was at Aschbe’s school. He held that notorious principle – “der Kugel” (the principle of a ball). Proceeding from that principle - on the basis of light, semi-shade, shade – we studied form and its construction,”

Igor Grabar (1871-1960), his fellow student at Aschbe's studio, remembered the following directive from Aschbe:

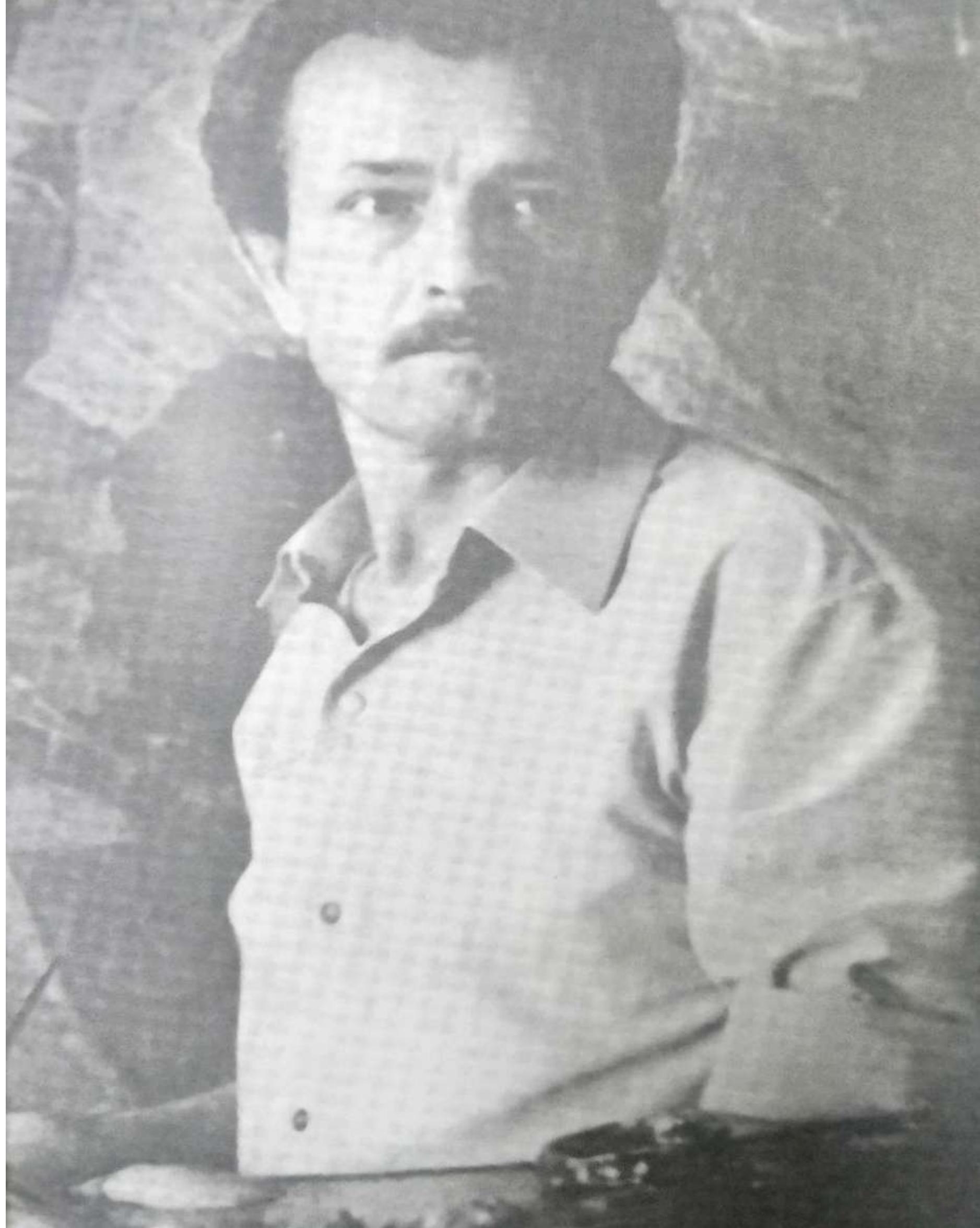
*“Both of us (Kardovsky and Grabar) drew a head as well as we could. And we could, to be frank, rather badly. Aschbe took a look and said: ‘You got it too accidentally, too copied, and meanwhile there are rules that you must know’. He took a piece of charcoal and drew a sphere covering it with an even tone, then applied a shade, extracted a reflection, threw projected shadow, and removed a light tone with a piece of bread and said: ‘This is the secret of modeling. All that is closer to you is lighter, all that is far is darker. All that is closer to the source of lighting is also lighter. What is far from it is darker. Remember it and use while drawing: nothing can be easier.’ When he finished and went away we glanced at each other, how really easy, indeed. Many of the same truths, we learned step by step in regard to designing the head and its details, the eye, the nose, the mouth and designing of the whole human figure.”*

Kardovsky explained that form possesses characteristics, just like geometric bodies; cube, sphere, cylinder, etc. A living form, of course, is not a regular geometric form, however, in principle it comes close and thus repeats the rules of light's disposition over planes retreating in perspective. While drawing a sphere, one knows what devices must be applied for depiction of its surface in the shade and in the light, as well as the rules are known for depiction of a cube, pyramid or some more complicated figure. For a live model, the understanding of form must reach the same clarity and simplicity. While drawing a head one has to proceed from the presumption that its dominant form is spherical, to be correct it is ellipsoid, or egg-like in shape. The nose is a prism with a front surface, two sides and a base. The eye is a sphere, and eyelids encircle it with semispherical outlines. When drawing a neck one must realize that its dominant form is a cylinder. While drawing a living model, the overall idea of the various shapes involved must not distort the real depiction of nature. Certainly, it is to be remembered that a nose, for instance, is a prism bordered in space with four basic planes. Still one must draw not a prism but a live nose in all its variations such as high-bridged or turned-up, wide or narrow, snub or straight. It is necessary to draw a living form, a living man, not a collection of forms.

“In drawing one must have the eye that sees, the head that reasons, and the hand that does,” Tchistyakov said.

And Kardovsky often repeated these words:

*“The block of form nevertheless always comes as the initial step in the process of drawing. There is even a specific word for it that can be translated as ‘round-cut’. Having generally outlined the volume mass always in full size with shaded planes, the pupils must proceed to the facial part of the head. There they have to mark the profile middle line from top to bottom, then the line of forehead from left to right, and parallel to it is the line of the eyes dividing the face into two equal parts, top and bottom. Then the pupils set to placing the nose and the eyes. Having determined the nose's size in proportion to forehead and chin, they show its dominant form – the prism and covered it by light and shade, the front surface in the light, two sides in semi-tones, and the base in the shade in conditions of upper and side lighting.”*



Working "by pairs" allowed for the symmetrical placing of eyebrows, cheek-bones and all paired parts of the face. For instance, to find the proper placement for the eyes, there was the rule that said to draw a perpendicular from the nose's base, assuming it as horizontal, across the nostril up to the bridge.

The crossing point with the eyes' line would be the place for lachrymal end. And then taking into consideration that the dominant form of the eye is spherical, imagine how it would be set in the eye socket. One must keep in mind that it is necessary to find the place for both eyes simultaneously to avoid one being higher or lower than another. Depending on foreshortening, the axis of the eyes must correspond with the profile line. The placement of the ears is chosen in accordance with the height of the nose. If the head were held straight, the ears would be on the same line as of the highest part of the nose. However, if the head drooped, the ears would be higher. And if the subject's face looked up, the ears would be lower. Only after the major round-cut is made, could the student proceed to working out the details. For a nose to be modeled it needs to be perfectly worked in tone. For an eye to be firmly set in the eye socket, it is not enough to place it correctly in relation to the nose, eyebrow, nose-bridge, etc.

Drawings and paintings also needed to incorporate the correct tonal correspondence with lighted forehead and nose, distinctly read eyelids, whites, pupils, and the highlights in place. The term tone refers to the relation between the degrees of illumination of different surfaces of an object. As the drawing is being made of a live subject, the idea of tone includes both the light and the color.



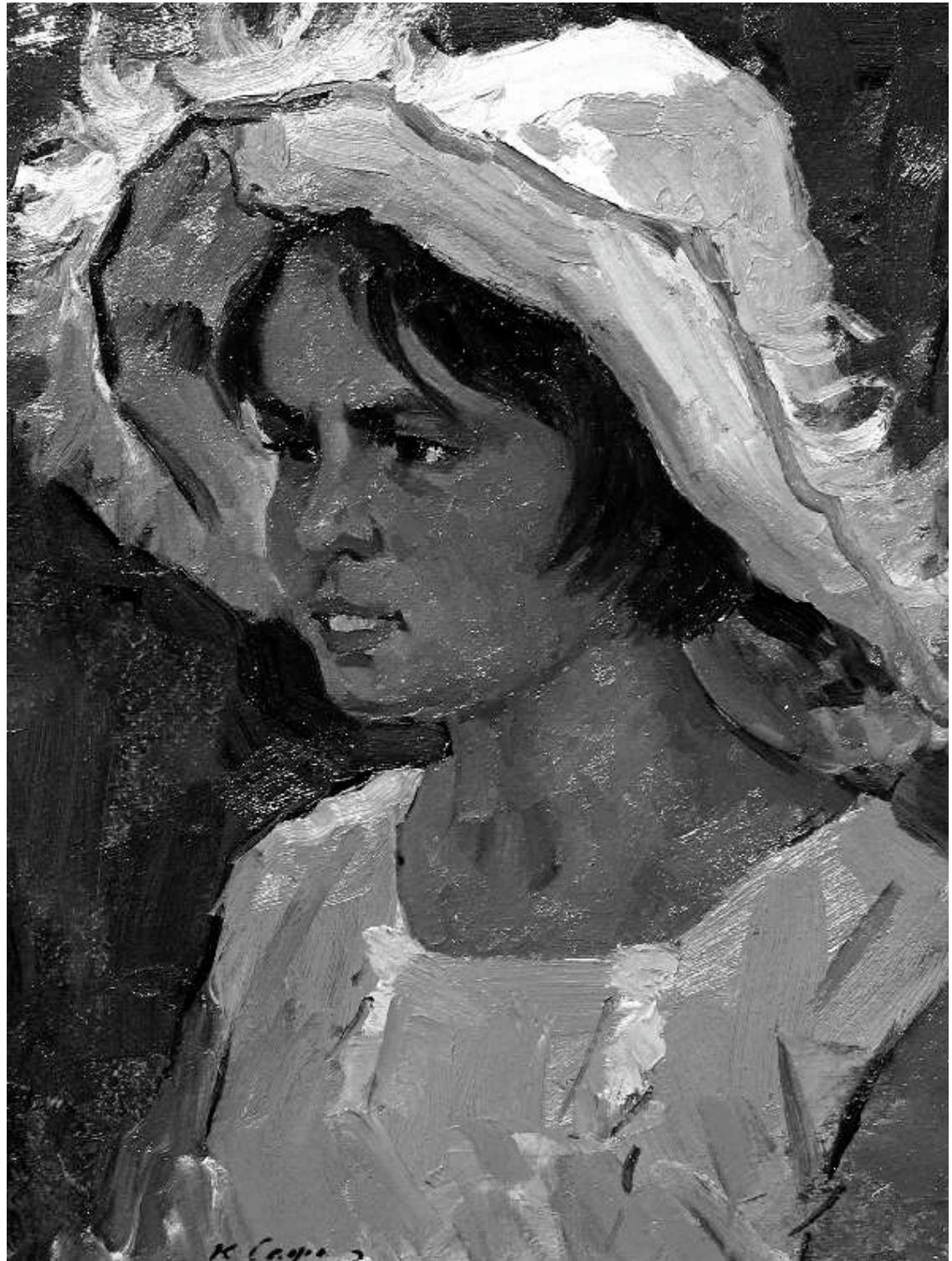
Boris Sporykhin, *Returning to Service*, 1955, O/C, 21.5" x 32.5"

Because the principal objective of the Soviet art education system was the studying of nature by students, less attention was paid to plaster casts, copying, and free composing. The previously existing academic scheme of making multiple copies of approved patterns along with many other conventionalities became passé. Kardovsky dismisses the importance of these dead skills:

*“The study of drawing and painting must be focused on nature. Of course, remarkable examples of the art of the past possess enormous educational importance. However, copying them can be useful only in those instances when having acquired the skills in drawing and painting from nature you study those extraordinary patterns of creativity and comprehend the essence of it. Such studies develop taste and artistic sense and can be recommended to the students only at the end of the school course. If a student starts with copying of patterns, be they of the highest mastery, he would be suppressed by that mastership, and without any understanding of its essence, would acquire dead skills.”*

While the generalizing system of Tchistyakov suffered somewhat at the hands of provincial art teachers, for the most part his approach proved its effectiveness. It should be noted that the opposing theoretical school, known as the academics, made great use of the system, too. Actually they adhered to the same principles although in a less obvious manner. Sometimes, “the academics” derided their opponents by creating caricatures of a crazy-looking artist with defocused eyes gazing in different directions seeking the “major break of the form”, i.e., the main tonal contrast marking the most protruding parts regardless of the deepness of other shades.

Throughout the 20th century, the methods of Soviet art education remained unchanged. The citadels of tradition such as the Repin Academy and the Surikov Institute offered incoming students the same old studios with bare cracked grey walls and easels daubed with paint. Each faculty has a stock of rags, draperies, fruits molded of paraffin, and different utensils collected for still life. The inevitable plaster casts and masks of Greek and Roman sculpture covered with dust and memorable inscriptions in pencil stood in the corners and near windows. This dull and rather foreboding atmosphere was not exactly inspiring. And yet the magic always began when a teacher helped students discover the intricacies of form and delicate hues of color that an ordinary eye is simply unaware of. These revelations made what first appeared to be the most drab of sights, become a feast for the eyes. Every generation would find it all for themselves again and again. Unfortunately, the more time that passed, the less visible was the presence of inspired teaching in contemporary art.



Kamil Safargaleev, *Portrait of Young Girl*  
1965, oil on board, 16.5" x 14"

## Keepers of the Flame

Even today the elderly Russian artists of the former Soviet system, those mastodons of realism, remain convinced that their artistic heritage is the only true way of teaching visual arts and continue to insist that they represent the strongest systematic school of painting in the world. In terms of valuable tutorial methods, their opinions can hardly warrant any objections even though the style of the Soviet artistic past has lost its importance in today's kaleidoscope of individualism and mannerism.

These Soviet artists would agree with Salvador Dali's words,



*“Artist, learn from the beginning to draw and paint like the Old Masters, and only after that act at your own discretion – so you always will enjoy respect.”*

Sadly, these artists, even with all their skills and mastery, enjoy little respect nowadays. Only a few of them can be called prosperous. And yet, even at the age of 80, many keep working without hope for commercial success. In a world that all too often panders to the latest fashion and the accumulation of worldly goods, the dedication of these individuals to the artistic truths they hold dear demands great respect.

Grigoriy Kravchenko, *Homework*, 1952, O/C, 31.5" x 23.5"





## CHAPTER FIVE

### *Behind The Easel: Secrets Of Russian Impressionism*

Viewed against the background of 20th century world art, the Russian Realist School of painting appears rather monolithic. Up to the 1950's, the politically correct realist artists were supported by professional training based on Russian art's conservative branch. At this time, the principles of academicism were mildly fused with impressionist influences. The convincing naturalness achieved by the free and easy brushwork

of such artists as Repin (1844-1930), Surikov (1848-1916) and Serov (1865-1911) was chosen to become the model for all-accessible, popular and, propagandist art. Fortunately, the pupils of these maestros conveyed some secrets of impressionism to the Soviet generation artists.



Chebanov, *Larrissa*, 1952, charcoal on paper, 18.5" x 14"

### **Bringing Landscapes Alive on the Canvas**

To benefit from the advice of the outstanding landscape painter Arkady Rylov (1870-1939), one can refer to his pedagogical article in the Young Artist magazine from 1938.

### **A Study in Summer**

"Start to draw the landscape's contour and shadow spots with only one liquid paint, for instance ultramarine. It is necessary to sort out everything correctly on the canvas. During the first setting, the drawing should encompass all subject matter. If the weather and lighting are the same on the second day, continue the study in colors. Start with the item that plays the major role. No detail is needed. If the day is sunny, start with the best-lighted areas, then continue on to the semi-tones and the darkest places, always comparing the relation of light, medium and dark spots. After capturing the whole landscape, look from a distance at your work comparing it with nature. Then I check the relation of the landscape to the sky, strengthening or extinguishing the sunspots on the ground and trees while seeking the bluish reflexes of the sky in the shadows. After these steps, I start detailing the parts of the landscape." "When painting the clouds, I compose three or four tones on the palette, light, medium, and shady. Armed with these colors, I can achieve the characteristic shape of the clouds within the framework of their perspective recession, and immediately surround them with the blue colors of the sky.

In the afternoon, the light on closer clouds is cold, while the shadow is warm. For distant clouds the opposite is true: warm light, cold shadow. Warm colors are reddish-violet, red, orange, yellow, yellow-green tones, the cool colors being bluish-violet, blue and bluish-green tones.”

### **A Study in Autumn**

*“When outlining contours, start with the brightest yellow spots. However, don’t put these bright paints on thickly otherwise, they will bleed into the brushstrokes of surrounding tones. Because the weather in autumn is not stable, you can only count on one setting.”*

### **A Study in Winter**

*“Choose a simple motif and paint it fast, say in half an hour. Start with the dark masses of forest or single trees, and afterwards add the snow and the sky.”*

Note Rylov frequently used tone, clearly it is deemed more important than contour and even color. The Soviet art teachers loved to quote Delacroix:

*“Half-shade tinted by reflections give you the tone, the tone creating the value, which is of the greatest importance for any item and imparts existence to it.”*

Light, which students were taught at school to pay so much attention to, is nothing more than an accidental circumstance. The true color is there in the semi-tone tinted by the reflection. This value gives the sensation of density and imparts the radical difference, which makes one item differ from another. Thus, the professional painter’s main task was to achieve the correct tonal vision thereby being able to render nature in a rapid and realistic manner.

### **Setting the Standards for Textural Virtuosity**

Among other secrets of pictorial mastery was the ability to create expressive and vivid texture of painting. Russian impressionist painter



Skubko-Karpas L., *Conversation*, 1954, pencil on paper, 4.5" x 6"

art teacher Konstantin Yuon said, "With a brush it is possible to draw, to model, to glaze, vibrate, stamp, divide and connect, hit, glaze, to smack and smooth."

Repin reportedly was able to point the eyes of a portrait with a palm-wide brush, thus some artists preferred to use wide brushes for expressive and roughly stroked texture. Repin and his most talented pupil, Nikolai Fechin (1881-1958), set the standards for technical virtuosity among Soviet artists.

Among professional circles, Fechin was a kind of legend, "the artist for the artists," and his methods were always mentioned to teachers as the model to follow. However, those artists who used technical effects excessively, either wielding a palette knife in a freehanded manner or painstakingly attempting to imitate the Old Masters, were always risking criticism for unnecessary and formal mannerism. The special charm of the many Soviet Russian impressionists is due to the cultivated modesty of pictorial means and absence of obtrusive visual effects.

### **The Alla Prima Approach: First Light, then Dark**

In contrast with the classical academic scheme, which demanded progress from darks to lights, the alla prima (of a first touch) impressionist method adhered to the reverse mode, such as the application of tones that first defined the lights, and then continued to the darker values. As a rule, the work started with a brief charcoal drawing of major outlines, which was subsequently overdubbed by some halfliquid usually dark-brown paint that also stressed the spots of deepest shade. It was considered bad form to work in sections, finishing some parts with detail before organizing the whole. A painter had to capture the basic so-called tonal relations leaving no spot of clear canvas, then proceed to model the volumes elaborating the surface with precisely found tints of light, halfshade, deep shade and reflections.

### **Exploring the Rewards of Oils**

For paintings executed in the manner followed by the artists of the period, the most important role in a picture's final appearance was played by the texture of brushstrokes, which created the sensation of vividness, emotional tension, or airy freshness. Oil paints being so flexible, it was natural that this medium was popular with the Soviet Russian impressionists. Oil paints can be softly fused on the surface, or applied in massive layers. Separate blends of color mixed on the palette may be also brushed one into another straight on the canvas, creating subtlest



Skubko-Karpas L., *Young Woman*, 1954  
pencil on paper, 5.5" x 3.5"

nuances and iridescent hues. To achieve the right tone, light colors should be applied in thicker layers followed by darker ones, so the highlights of depicted shape are usually the most textured. (Sometimes, highlights could be applied with a palette knife, or even the whole shape could be modeled with it. This effective technique demands virtuoso, exactness and mastery. The artist's eye must see generalized geometrical structure of form, and the hand must be able to render it in laconic slaps.) To a great extent, the lively and illusionist character of the best samples of mid-20th century Russian painting is due to the unchained brushwork, which within the limits of the style makes the artist's signatures unmistakably recognizable.

The main secret of the Soviet Russian impressionists lay in the artist's well-trained eye combined with plentiful nature study. So while some students were spending countless hours drawing plaster casts, painting draperies, heads and nudes in the Russian art colleges and institutes, others crowded the streets of old Russian towns pursuing their studies in the open air. They adored Repin, Serov and Surikov who served as role models of true highly skilled realist art. Regarding Western art, they admired Rembrandt, Rubens and Frans Hals while hooting at the bourgeois quirks of abstractionists and pop-artists and making no attempt to understand their motivation. Some of this arrogance remains in the heads of Russian artists today, although few are proficient enough to meet the high standards of the realistic style. The art that was created during the 1950's and the 1960's bears the mark of something special, something genuine. Sadly enough, few artists in today's Russia or anywhere else, for that matter, can paint in that style.



Usachev E., *Morning*, 1962, pencil on paper, 33" x 24"





## CHAPTER SIX

### *Materials and Technology*

#### **Painting the Body of Venus with Mud**

The negligence of technology and lack of good materials were a result of the epoch's asceticism. Ideological rather than commercial orientation of art prioritized simple methods and unification of technique. A professional was considered to be able, paraphrasing the words by Delacroix, "to take some mud and paint a body of Venus with it." (For insightful information regarding art materials and accessories during the Soviet period, articles written by important artists, art teachers and art restorers such as F. Rerberg, N. Odnoralov, and N. Ignatova published between 1937 and 1984 are recommended.)

#### **Paints: Making Do with Less than Perfect**

Since the palette of Russian-made paints was not as diverse as that of the West, the Union of Artists occasionally offered its privileged members opportunities to purchase Le Franc & Bourgeois or Windsor Newton paints as well as Dutch Rembrandt brushes. For instance, Pyotr Konchalovskiy (1876-1956) had his own paint-grinding machine and made his colors from pigments purchased abroad. However, few artists made their own paints because dry pigments were usually in short supply and could not provide a wide range of colors.

The majority satisfied their needs with the products of two factories, one in Leningrad, another in Podolsk, near Moscow. The pigments included cheap ochre and browns mined in geological beds or synthesized analogues of expensive natural minerals, variations of cobalt, cadmiums, and mars. The switch to synthesized pigments made in the 1950's was the result of scientific and industrial progress, and some historically known paints like Prussian blue or Van Dyke red were forgotten.

Making oil paint demands the time consuming processing of using flax oil substance to achieve its thorough discoloration and oxygenation. Because the whole Soviet economy preferred quantity instead of quality, paint production suffered from technological violations and process reductions. One example of this is the presence of raw oil is the reason that Russian-made white paints become yellowish with the passage of time unlike imported products.



Skubko-Karpas L., *In Trouble*  
1954, pencil on paper, 5" x 5"

## **A Typical Palette of Soviet Era Paints**

The selection of available paints of factory production was cheap as well as practical. By the middle of the 20th century, zinc white finally displaced ceruse or white lead although not so dense, strong and fast drying, it was non-toxic and inexpensive. However, even during the 1930's, lead white was still in use, some artists mixed it with zinc white in proportion 1:1, 1/3 or 2/3. The required reds were carmine, transparent deep crimson color and red cadmium. The brightest of domestic yellow cadmium was produced in five tints, orange, dark, medium, light, lemon. Though yellow chrome was cheaper, the artists knew it could lose its brightness in several years. Ranging from light yellow to brownish red, natural colors of ochre were offered widely by the Podolsk factory, created by using earth pigments from different regions of the Soviet Union. It was considered a must to have yellow and gold-yellow ochre of the Leningrad factory. Sienna, with its dark yellow and burnt tints, was replaced by analogs excavated from in the Soviet Union though still bearing the Italian name. For the most part, the great variety of greens were blends of mineral and synthetic blue and yellow pigments, which many artists preferred to mix straight on their palette. However, Viridian or Veronese green, - called Emerald green by the Russians, was considered inimitable. The famous Soviet landscape painter Arkadiy Rylov (1870-1939) achieved the widest possible range of nuances using only this shade of green. Ultramarine was surely the best of the blue colors, however, it was not always available. Lighter cobalt blue rated a poor second. While the dramatic Berlin azure or Prussian blue was still used during the mid 1950's, its propensity to weaken and decay and bleed into other colors could create serious problems. Carbon was the most popular brown color.

To avoid "dirty" or dull hues, experienced artists kept in mind that not more than two or three pigments should be mixed together. Also, it was imperative not to mix cadmiums with ferrous pigments like ochre and mars since this would cause the end result to lose brightness with the passage of time.

## **Instruments: Palettes, Brushes and Palette Knives**

The paints would be placed on a palette made in a shape easy for the left hand to hold along with a couple of brushes. Since plywood is heavy, palettes were usually made of a single wooden plate thicker near the oval hole for the thumb and shaved thin to the left and upper ends. Such a palette is easy to hold and it does not press in the thumb. Large palettes are made in the shape of a wing with a piece of lead in the bottom right end for counterweight. The wood must be oiled to avoid thickening of paints.

The colors are placed on the upper and left sides while the center is used for mixing. Each color must have its permanent place, which artist chooses. In time the selection is made automatically. The usual order is for white to be on the right side with the other colors following a rainbow-like sequence to the left. A pattern introduced by Ilya Repin (1844-1930), which is more suitable for plein air painting, is to place white in the middle with warm colors such as yellows and reds to the right and cool colors such as greens and blues to the left. Blacks and browns were confined to the palette's extreme left side.

The brushes most often used were the rough flat bristle variety of different sizes with smaller sable, roundshaped ones used for fine detailing. For every type of paint mixture, light or dark, green or red, a separate brush was used, ensuring that the colors remain clear and exact and the work could proceed at a fast pace.

The blades of the palettes or painting knives, varying in size, were changed from horn to elastic steel over the years. While they were important instruments of painting in the impasto technique, the main functions of knives were for cleaning and mixing paint.



Viktor Nikolsky, *Male Model*  
1950, pencil on paper, 22" x 33"

### **“Canvases” That Challenged Future Restorers**

Employment for future restorers was ultimately guaranteed by the casual Soviet attitude towards materials on which to paint. Everything that was at hand was utilized, paper, packaging cardboard, plywood, pressed tissue, Masonite boards and lining fabrics. Oiled paper oxygenated over time, and it proved to be the most fragile base even though artists were advised to mount this material on cardboard. Other recommendations were correct as well as useful. The problem was that the artists rarely followed them according to the letter.

For the younger artists, the choice to buy or not to buy factory-prepared canvases always involved the necessity of saving money, while the established members of the Artist’s Union enjoyed free although limited art supplies.

The most popular canvases were linen ones of domestic origin. The variations in texture included rough sackcloth, flimsy underlining for overcoats, netted fabric used for theater scenery and the less affordable fine artists’ canvas of doubled, tripled, and four-fiber threads. The latter was popularly known as the Repin canvas. The main defect of ready-made factory canvas was the poor quality of the glue used. These canvases often were not elastic enough and could start cracking in several years, while the paints flaked because of bad adhesion. Thus some artists prepared canvases by themselves with more or less success. Victor Gromyko (1923-) said that he prepared the priming for Mrs. Tyshkevich with the son following some ancient recipe on a tempera base with egg yolks. He was very proud that not a single crack appeared in 50 years.

The use of colored canvases was not typical because pictorial tasks were aimed at achieving maximum flexibility of color vision and preference of plein air nature studies. The artists were taught not to seek academic finish or unnecessary salon gloss, rather to work hard on steady improvement and capturing of an image with the opportunity to make changes every step of the way.

### **Preparing the Canvas for Use**

The skill of making proper pitching stretchers with sliding joints and wedge pins for canvases survived in museums and restoration workshops. Carpenters attached to the Artists’ Union provided more or less acceptable stretchers for important commissions. However, most of the artists had to make do with inaccurate blind constructions of wooden planks fixed with plywood triangles that they learned to make during student years.

To prepare a stretched canvas for painting, it first must be coated with a glue of 10 percent jellified gelatin. This material is applied with a broad brush or wooden ruler to avoid leaking on the backside. For priming, the following recipe was widely used, 10 grams of gelatin, 100 grams of chalk powder, 400 cubic centimeters of water and 4 cubic centimeters of glycerin or honey for plasticity. This amount is enough for two square meters of canvas when applied with a brush.

Another compound involved two eggs mixed with 120 cm of water and 120 grams of white zinc pigment mixed in. This blend provided double coating for 1 mm of canvas. Gelatin, which was then widely produced for the needs of photography, was the painters' preferred glue. Sturgeon glue was a much more elastic, reliable, and expensive analog, but it was available for art restorers only. Flour paste was the cheapest and worst variant.

Ready-made priming on canvases offered by the workshops of the Artistic Foundation of the USSR was emulsive, consisting of zinc white, glue, made from gelatin, casein, fish glue, or polyvinyl acetate, drying linseed oil, emulsifier and conservative (sodium pentachlorophenol). Manufactured cardboards had more simple oil or casein priming, along with the same emulsive. Another type of priming used for both canvases and cardboard was called semi-oil and consisted of gesso or a chalk-and-glue layer covered with a thick layer of pure white oil paint.



Usachev E., *Dreamer*, 1962, pencil on paper, 33" x 24"

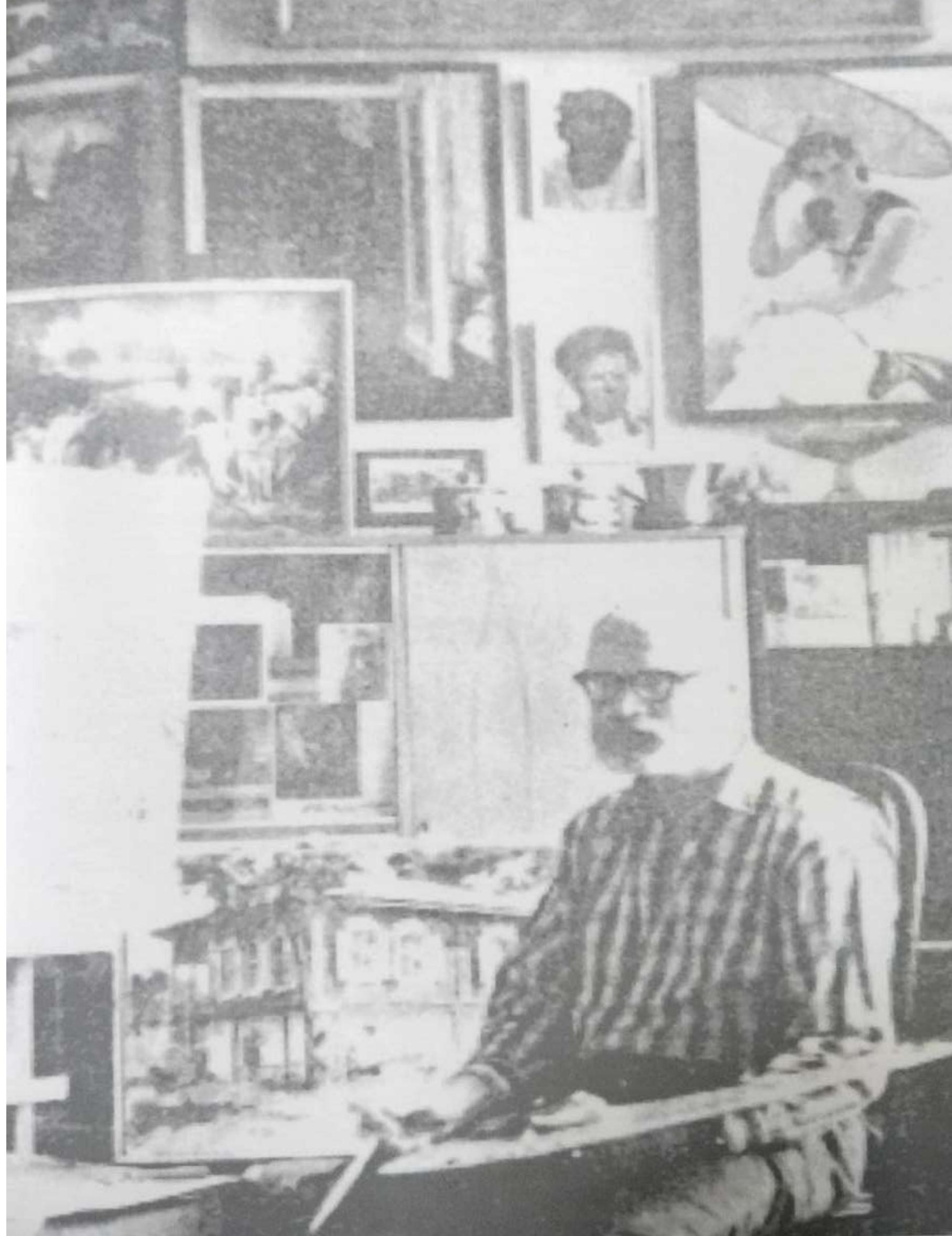
### Applying the Finishing Touches

The ready-made paints of the Leningrad and Podolsk factories dried under normal conditions in about five or six days. At higher temperature and intense lighting, the process took three days. The terms of drying depend also upon the thickness of the paint layer. Intense sunlight with its ultraviolet rays destroys the oil film. Drying in the darkness may last up to 60 days. Complete polymerization or drying of the oil paints takes a year and only after that it is recommended to cover a painting with varnish.

Rarely could artists be so patient. However, technology allowed and moreover demanded the introduction of varnishes in the very process of painting. The a la prima or one touch technique does not necessarily mean one setting or single layered painting. Large compositions usually involve a long period of time. The secret is that before the work is continued, the previous layers must dry for at least several days, and varnish must be added to the paint for better adhesion. Impressionists of the beginning of the century already discovered this process. Konstantin Korovin (1861-1939) and Philippe Malyavin (1869-1940) painted heavy canvases, which are preserved better than those of their contemporaries not so "impasto" works. The oeuvres of those Soviet artists who neglected layers adhesion now suffer from flaking and need conservation much more than older works.

White spirit and purified turpentine served as solvents for brush-washing; the latter most frequently was included in the composition of the paints medium as the so-called triple varnish, made from dammar or mastix, linseed oil and turpentine in equal proportions. The composition allows the paints to remain fluid enough and movable, and prevented them from

developing a matt condition after drying. The factories produced varnishes as 30% diffusions of resins in purified turpentine except the copal varnish where the resin is diffused in linseed oil. The varnishes that could be added to the oil paint included mastix, dammar, and copal. Dammar sometimes was applied as a final varnish. And the negative consequences of its low resistance to moisture can be traced. Mastix varnish could be also used for retouching and final covering. Later special retouching varnish appeared composed of turpentine solutions with mastix and a half-synthetic blend of acrylic and pistachio resins with addition of aviation petrol. The best varnish for final coating was the one of pistachio resin, since the 1970's improved with acrylic additive. It provides elastic protective film, which stays almost colorless for a very long time.



However, thick glossy coating was not in fashion during the time of the Russian Impressionists.. For many artists the major purpose of varnishing was simply to refresh the darkened places of a painting. Before the annual exhibitions, they rubbed varnish in with a brush or simply palmed some varnish, diluted 1:1 with turpentine. Small works might not have any final coating at all. If an artist wanted his painting to have a matt finish, he had to paint it with oil-absorbing gesso priming, or make a matt varnish himself by mixing a shiny varnish with wax soaked in turpentine. No factory products of that kind were available at that time.

### **The Importance of Professional Secrets**

A true artist can never be indifferent to the quality of his work, and professional secrets were passed around by word of mouth in the artistic circles. Painters were often advised to use final glazing; transparent layers called in Russian "lessirovki" (from Italian "lessare" - to wash over with liquid paint) in order to attain the brightest intensity and richness of color. While this classical painting device was often forgotten in the pursuit of capturing nature rapidly, many artists used it for enrichment of texture and illusionist rendering of lighting effects and materiality.





## CHAPTER SEVEN

*An Insider's Look At The Soviet Art Education System And Soviet Artists*

### Rigorous Demands of the System

The Soviets developed a demanding educational system that was utilized until the breakup of the Union. Strenuous as it was, the author is happy to have received the benefits of this educational system. Even today, many art critics consider the following teaching mode the last great system of classical art education.

Primary Phase – For the development and training of art skills, a three-grade educational system was established in the Soviet Union in the 1940's. The first primary step started when schoolchildren of six and seven were invited to attend art studios. These studios, along with facilities for groups of technicians, dancers, choir singers, were attached to the local Young Pioneers' or workers' culture clubs. Most of the art studios were supervised by professional exhibiting artists and could offer children much more than the obligatory one day a week drawing lessons at ordinary school.

*"I was fortunate enough to attend the Moscow Art School for Children. The instructors were all professional artists who took their teaching job very seriously. Everybody all had an easel, professional brushes and other art supplies. The program of study included drawing and painting still life, landscapes and portraits. Students started to draw people at the age of eight. After every semester, there was an art show that the teachers judged and each student was given a grade."*

Elena Kohn

Secondary School – While youngsters were busy with gouache paints and crayons, the teenagers concentrated on preparing to enter an art college. To pass the secondary school exams, they had to draw a still life of three or four items in pencil or charcoal, to paint a still life with fruit, pots, vases and draperies in watercolors or oils and to create a composition on a given subject in any traditional medium. Along with completing general secondary education, the four years of study included extensive four or six hours daily classes in drawing, painting and composition. The schedule also included weekly classes in anatomy, perspective, scriptwriting and some other specialized disciplines such as art materials and technology.

A secondary school diploma gave the graduate the right to work for advertising, propaganda, crafts and industry. It also placed the graduate in a favored position should they seek to enter an advanced art institute. To achieve entry, the task was to draw a nude model in pencil, a head of a model in pencil, to paint a still-life and a portrait with hands in oils, to create a draft composition in color on a freely chosen theme and to create a draft graphic composition on a given subject.

*"During the last years in secondary art school students were prepared to pass university exams. More attention was paid and more time spent on studying anatomy, drawing and painting of life models as well as portraits. The teachers were very strict and any time any student made a mistake, they had to start over. At the same time, they were very good about explaining and illustrating how to avoid mistakes."*



Yuri Vinogradov, *Driver*, 1964, oil on board, 57" x 75.5"

Advanced College Level – To enter Moscow University, the exams took almost a week and involved competition between 120 students for one admission! At the University, the teachers were very famous artists whose works were collected by the major Russian museums, notables such as P. Andropov, I. Kuznetsov and I. Chevanov. They always had a brush or pencil handy to illustrate on canvas or paper what they recommended.

The six years of courses involved in pursuing a diploma from a higher academic institute focused on three basic disciplines in the most thorough and painstaking manner. The suggested time allotment for drawing a nude was approximately 14 hours (two hours a day for a week) while drawing a head took 12 hours (two hours a day for six days). The difficult job of model sitting limited daily allotments. Sixteen hours were proposed as time needed to paint a still life in oils. To paint a portrait with hands, 24 hours were apportioned in six or more days.

After the second year of study, students had to choose a certain studio headed by one tutor, whose instruction they thought would be the most beneficial. Many well-known artists headed the studios at prestigious institutes, a position that guaranteed respect and importance. No specific pedagogical talent was needed, though many of the artists possessed it. The main principle of teaching was the example set by the tutor as well as their distinctive correction of the student's work. In some instances, the latter was very laconic, for example, Sergei Gerasimov's murmuring "not bad" was considered as a compliment while "not bad, not bad" was interpreted as the highest possible praise. The final year of study was devoted to the creation of a full-scale diploma project, which involved numerous preliminary studies and drafts and was often based on a historical theme or romanticized contemporary life.

## The Author's Personal Experiences with Impressionist Painters

*“A good friend of my father, Nicolai Antipin was a frequent visitor to our home while I was studying at the University. He had been taught by a student of Repin and, like the master, was passionate about art. I remember he always carried a little sketchbook with him, and obvious to the world around him, sketched on the train, in the subway, on the bus, even while he was walking! I also met Andrei Surovtsev when I was a university student. He had a lot of exhibits in Moscow and, in 1982, was named the Honored Artist of Russia. He belonged to the WWII generation and the war proved much thematic material for his artwork. An ardent traveler who been the Black Sea area as well as Russia's Asian provinces, he always encouraged me to get out and explore the small ethnic villages beyond the city metropolis. Another artist encountered at my parent's home was Pavel Nickonov, who was chosen Honored Artist of Russia in 1980. Known for his figurative artworks dealing with everyday life, this impressionist artist was known for his wide, bold brushstrokes and unusual color combinations. He always told me, “Elena, don't be afraid to break the rules! If you obey rules all the time, you won't grow as an artist!”*

Elena Kohn

## An Artist's Life Under Soviet Rule

After completing their education, artists were invited to join the Union of Artists where they could enjoy the privileges of official support. Created in 1957, this organization supplied the artists with studio space, art materials and provided the administration for the granting of commissions. Competition was extreme, and it took even the most talented candidates several years to attain full union membership. The union also maintained its own publishing house “Sovetsky Khudozhnik” (The Soviet Artist), which printed albums, catalogues and standard one-person brochures for its members.

In all aspects of Soviet life, there was a bureaucratic stratification in which only those who gained favor with the established order could advance until they were at the pinnacle of their profession. In the visual arts, it was the Academy of Fine Arts, created in 1947. The former Academy, founded by Catherine the Great in 1757, was closed after the October 1917 Revolution. Only the elite of the Soviet art world became members of the academy, with just 45 full-time and 25 corresponding members permitted at any given time. The organization was responsible for enforcing the state's standards for artistic development and education. The words of Sergei Gerasimov reflected these goals:

*“The best artists are forwards in the column of mankind marching towards the progress The best works of fine arts are outposts of the bright future. Since ancient times the real art strives to introduce a man to a better world, to contribute to his improvement, to arouse the lofty feelings.”*

The restrictive and highly organized Soviet system of state art support allowed artists to occupy a relatively prosperous and prestigious stratum of society. During the Soviet regime, Moscow artists had at their disposal huge blocks of specially built studios where they worked door-to-door.

However, while artists lived well under the Soviet system, they also worked hard. In order to continue enjoying their special status, every artist was required to submit recent works to exhibition committees on a regular basis. Exhibitions were comprehensive and held all across the country, representing city, and regional and national levels. These exhibitions served as important propaganda tools, marking every significant event in the life of the Soviet Union such as the anniversaries of the revolution and Communist Party meetings or congresses. Artists were awarded with state prizes and honorary title on the republic and all-union levels. The titles were Merited Artist and the highest one being People's Artist. As a rule, these titles were awarded for successful implementation of some extensive and propagandistically important state commission. Despite the competitive spirit between artists, each attempting to advance his or her career, there was little favoritism involved with choosing the artists who would receive awards. One-man shows were another coveted honor to add to one's curriculum vitae, usually held at the time of an artist's jubilee.

After graduation from an art institute, many promising young artists were sent to provincial towns to enforce the cultural front. Although they had more free time than their Moscow counterparts, they still produced works of art for the government. Commissions from authorities were well paid and artists had plenty of time to work on subjects of their own, to attend seminars as well as enjoy the use of collective dachas. They often painted scenes from nature to maintain their skills, as landscape art was accepted by the regime since it glorified the scope of Mother Russia. Many also taught at the local art schools, passing on their mastery to pupils. Strong communities of artists still exist in the cities like Nizhny Novgorod, Voronezh, Kursk, Penza, Vladimir, Samara and Rostov-on-Don. In Novosibirsk, Siberia's greatest city, a higher art institute was created in the 1990's. Many older artists who live and work in Novosibirsk and now teach at the institute are graduates of the most important art schools of Moscow and Leningrad. Judging from those artists' early works, no one could call them "provincial," apart from the themes of their paintings.



Skubko-Karpas L., *Little Boy*, 1954, pencil on paper, 4.5" x 6"





# CONCLUSION

## Celebrating the Last Great European Impressionists

Inspired by certain Parisian artists who exhibited their works during the 1870's, impressionism or the impressionistic style has enjoyed many manifestations since that time. As the many plates in this book dramatize, Russian Impressionism, created during the Soviet period 1940-1960, represents one of the most important movements of that genre since Monet, Renoir and other illustrious names riveted the attention of the art world. However, though enthusiastically accepting certain aspects of this new trend, programs, manifestos or groups that slavishly adhered to impressionist ideas did not exist.

According to Russian art history, certain painters were influenced, used some devices, admired certain achievements or operated on the same wavelength as the French Impressionists. As museum director/curator David Tooker stresses in his preface, the most compelling difference between the French and the Russians is found in the choice of subject matter. While French Impressionism quickly acquired an international and cosmopolitan nature, from the very beginning the Russian interpretation was closely allied with love of the Motherland. The restrained and poignant paintings of the Soviet Impressionists provide a dramatic contrast to the light-hearted and sophisticated approach of the French.

This was the time of Joseph Stalin's ironhanded rule, when Western influences - especially in terms of subject matter - were seriously frowned upon. Seeking a compromise that allowed them to stay politically correct, leading Soviet artists combined academic fundamentalism and impressionist flexibility. And, as a result, they arrived at a unique interpretation of the latter.

Ironically, despite the rather ominous role of art critic assumed by the Soviet government, the artists of this period managed to paint some of the most joyous and intimate impressionistic works ever seen. They often created government-dictated works during the day, and labored far into the night on more personal works. These individuals truly made sacrifices for their art.

Although the paintings were often created in secret and certainly did not reflect any political dictate, sometimes they fell victim to the anti-Soviet fervor that swept the nation during the totalitarian empire's collapse. Created during the Soviet regime by leading Russian artists, these innocent bystanders were tainted with the same totalitarian label that damned government-approved works. Amid the chaos of the Soviet break-up, the harmless impressionist paintings became likely candidates for a box of matches and a can of gasoline.

Thanks to the dedication and diligence of my father, as Professor Gully points out, these historically important works managed to survive such a dire fate. And by secretly sending the threatened paintings to me in Arizona, the world is now able to see and study unique examples of Russian art painted by artists whose works also hang in Moscow's famed Hermitage, Moscow's Tretakov Gallery and other important Museums.

Celebrating the beauty of the country, the strength of the people, and the promise of national ideals, these Russian Impressionist paintings remain as endearing as the day they were painted. Art lovers around the world can now enjoy extraordinary glimpses into life behind the Iron Curtain. Intimate visual scenarios of young children practicing their piano lessons, fisherman reaping the riches of the sea, vacationers swimming at the beach and singers and actors practicing their craft delight contemporary audiences. Viewers are moved by poignant portraits of courageous survivors of war and enlightened by portraits of hope-filled pioneers.

*"I believe this art collection links all of humanity together," said David Tooker. "We are all survivors of life's turmoil, but to make such splendor out of adversity is the mark of greatness."*

Truer words were never spoken. These hidden visual treasures, locked for so many years behind the Iron Curtain, are truly some of the last great European impressionist works of the 20th century.

Elena Kohn





Boris Sporykhin  
*Don River View*, 1950  
O/C, 39.5" x 71"



Viktor Gromyko  
*Portrait of Mrs. Tyshkevich and son*, 1956  
O/C, 27.5" x 35"



Mikhail Dovgyallo  
*Mowing*, 1968  
O/C, 26.25" x 44"



Vladimir Kochunov  
*Novo-Atakovo*, 1950  
O/B, 19" x 25"



Mikhail Fomin  
*Summer*, 1957  
O/C, 27.5" x 37"



Georgiy Kiselev  
*Female model*, 1959  
O/C, 21.25" x 17.25"



Grigoriy Chernoskutov  
*Thoughts About The Past*, 1955  
O/C, 21" x 17"



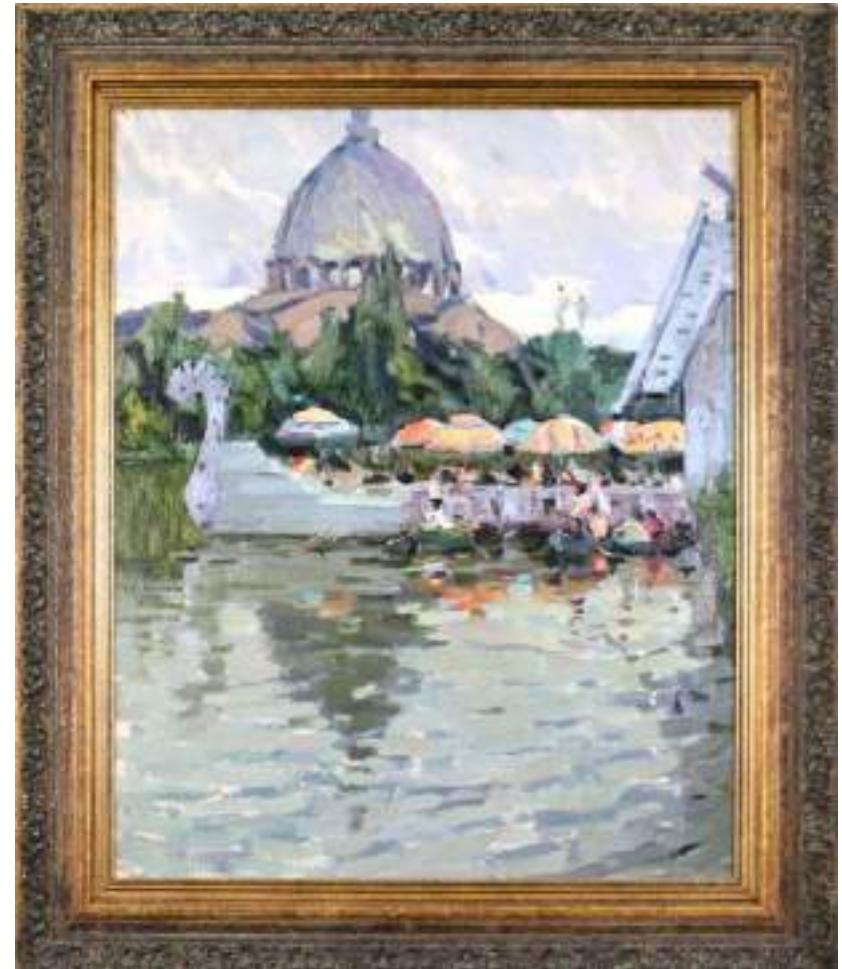
Eleonora Zharenova  
*Boys on the Beach*, 1952  
O/B, 10.5" x 6.5"



Mikhail Kamanin  
*On the Volga Shore*, 1953  
O/B, 21" x 16"



Evgeny Khoroshilov  
*I know...*, 1959  
O/C, 25.5" x 31.5"



Anatoliy Kriklovsky  
*Landscape with Umbrellas*, 1958  
O/B, 21" x 16.5"

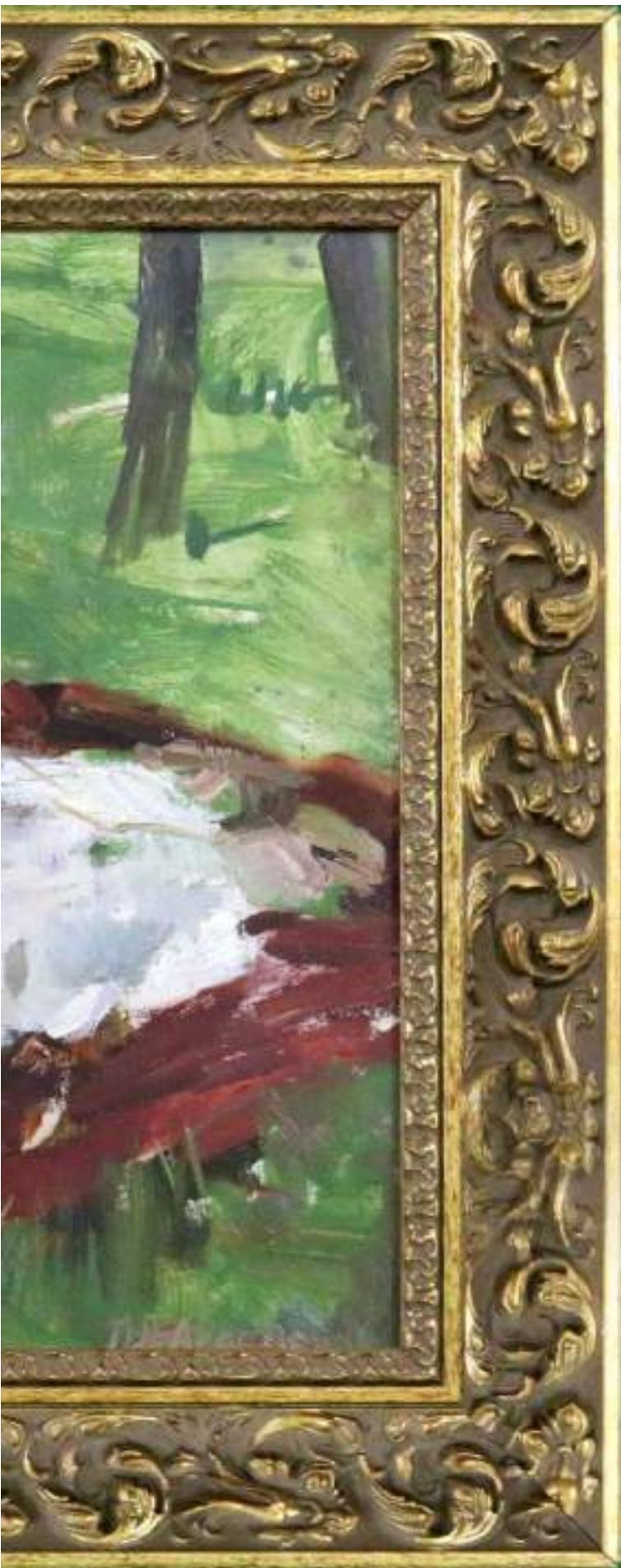


Vladimir Kochunov  
*Theater*, 1957  
O/B, 10.10" x 12.25"



Anatoliy Kuvin  
*Weaver*, 1959  
O/C, 19.5" x 13.25"





Pyotr Andrianov  
*Sleeping girl*, 1949  
O/B, 18.25" x 27"



Pyotr Andrianov  
*Dreamer*, 1954  
O/B, 29" x 34"



Victor Naumov  
*Children in the forest*, 1953  
O/C, 23.5" x 29.5"

Fedor Konyakhin  
*On the Dacha*, 1962  
O/C, 31.5" x 18.5"

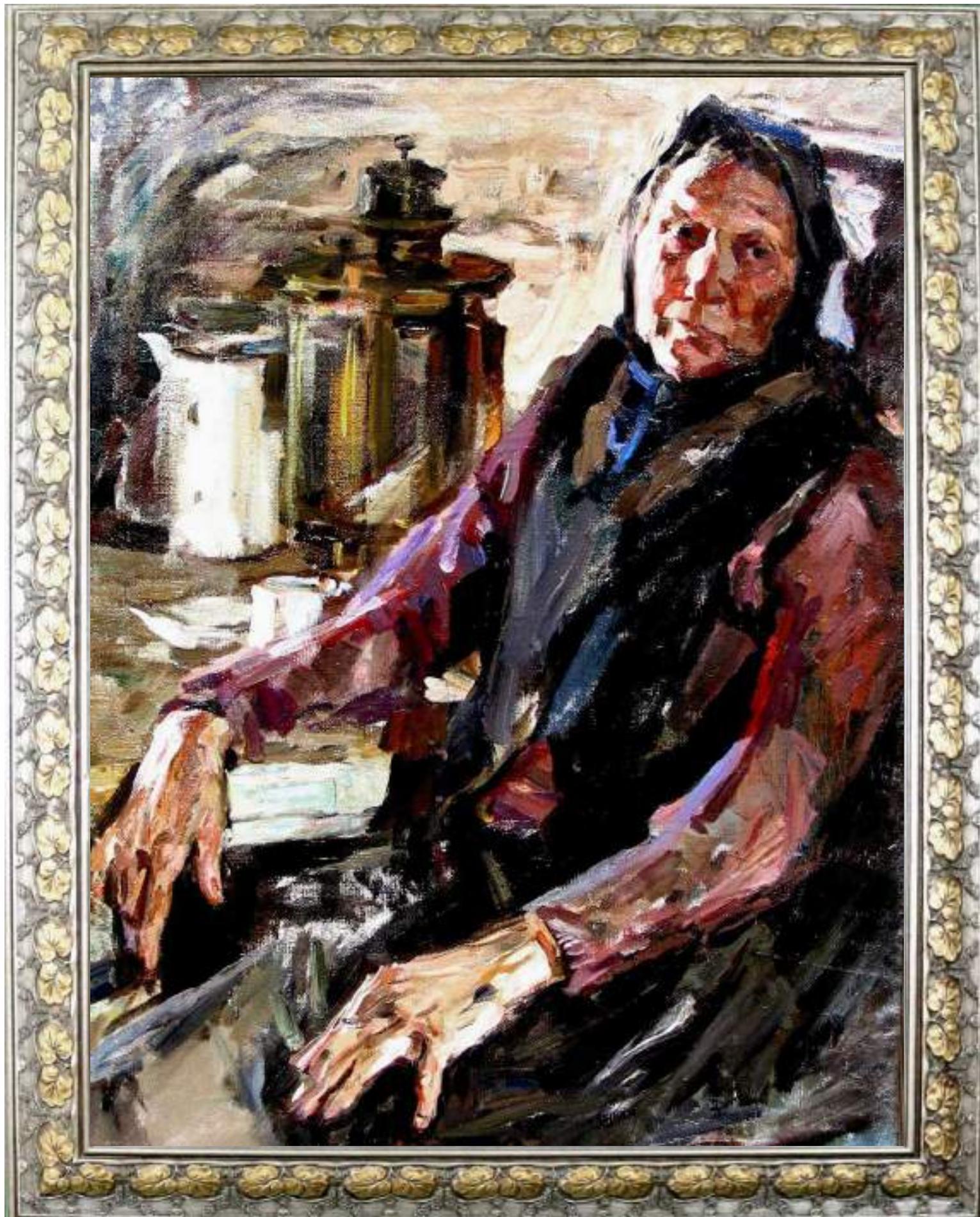


Nadezhda Lenskaya  
*Still life*, 1968  
O/B, 14" x 19"





Vasiliy Kashkurev  
*Nude*, 1956  
O/C, 35" x 39"



Klavdiya Balanova  
*Tired*, 1957  
O/C, 36.5" x 26.25"



Nikolai Matasov  
*Frown Crimea*, 1952  
O/B, 26.5" x 18.75"



Aleksandr Egidis  
*Nude*, 1968  
O/B, 31.5" x 19.5"

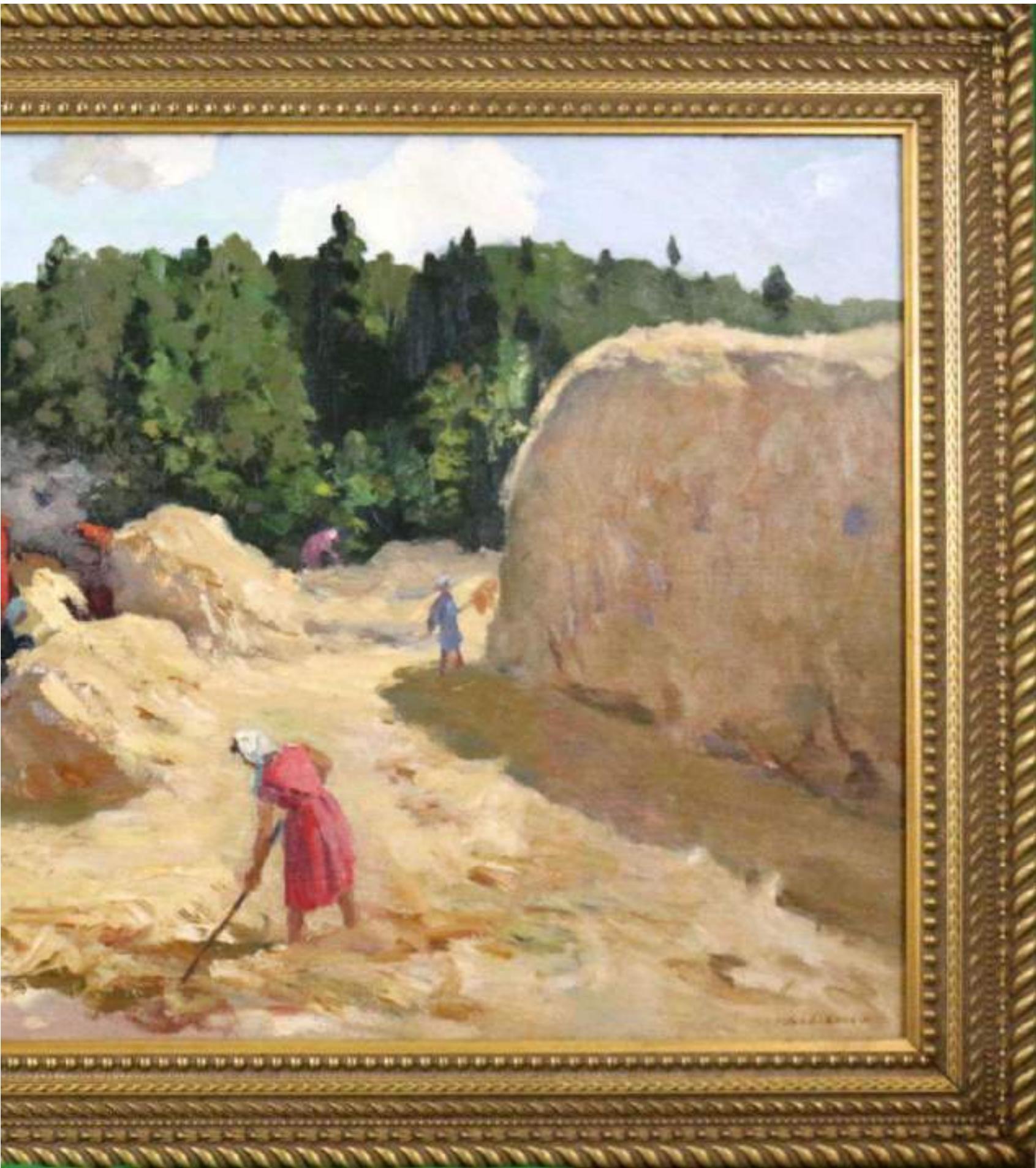


Vladimir Kochunov  
*Still life with Fruits*, 1954  
O/C, 34.5" x 23.5"



Yuriy Frolov  
*Portrait*, 1952  
O/B, 11.5" x 7.75"





Mikhail Dovgyallo  
*Harvest*, 1952  
O/C, 23.5" x 46.5"



Boris Kelberer  
*Portrait Of Student*, 1946  
O/C, 23" x 17.5"



Aleksey Motorin  
*Alenka*, 1952  
O/B, 13.5" x 19.5"



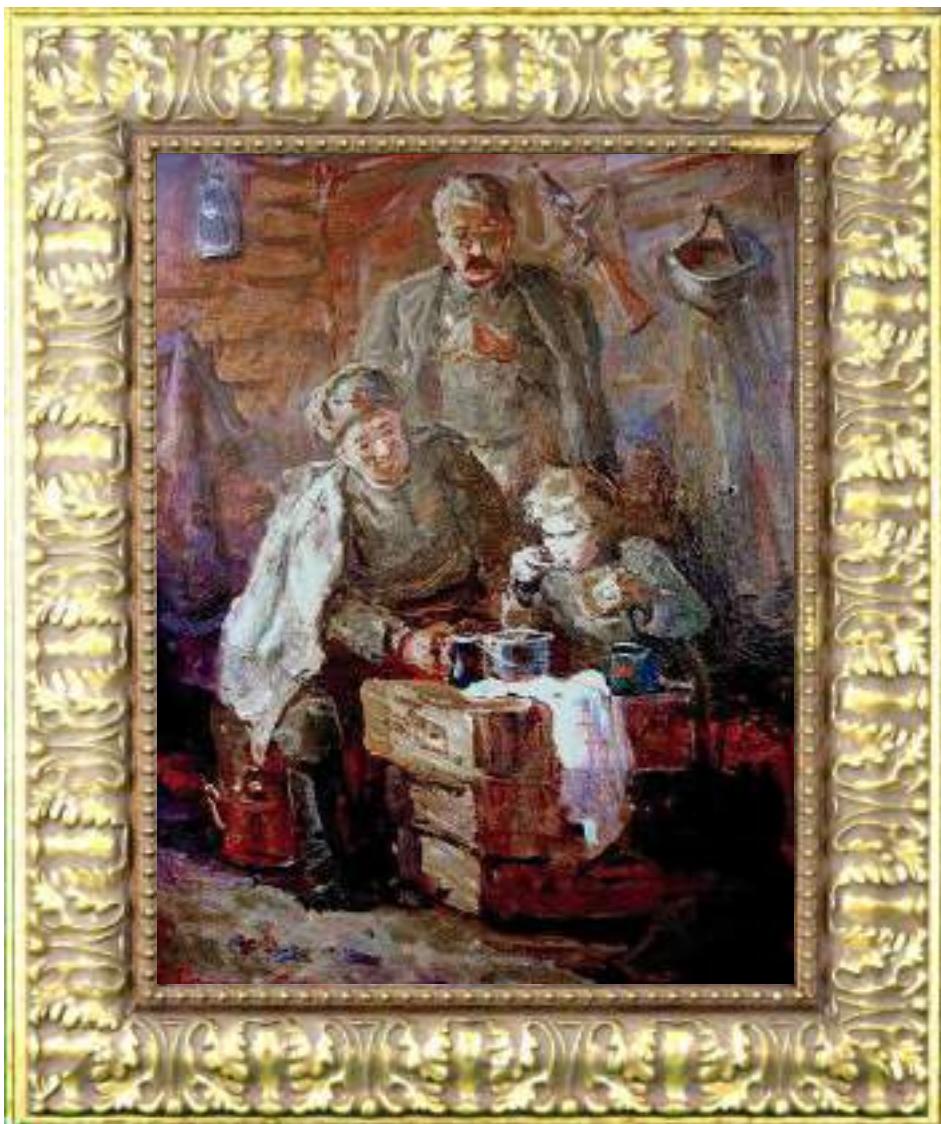
Boris Milovidov  
*Old Man From The Village*, 1950  
O/C, 28.25" x 24.75"



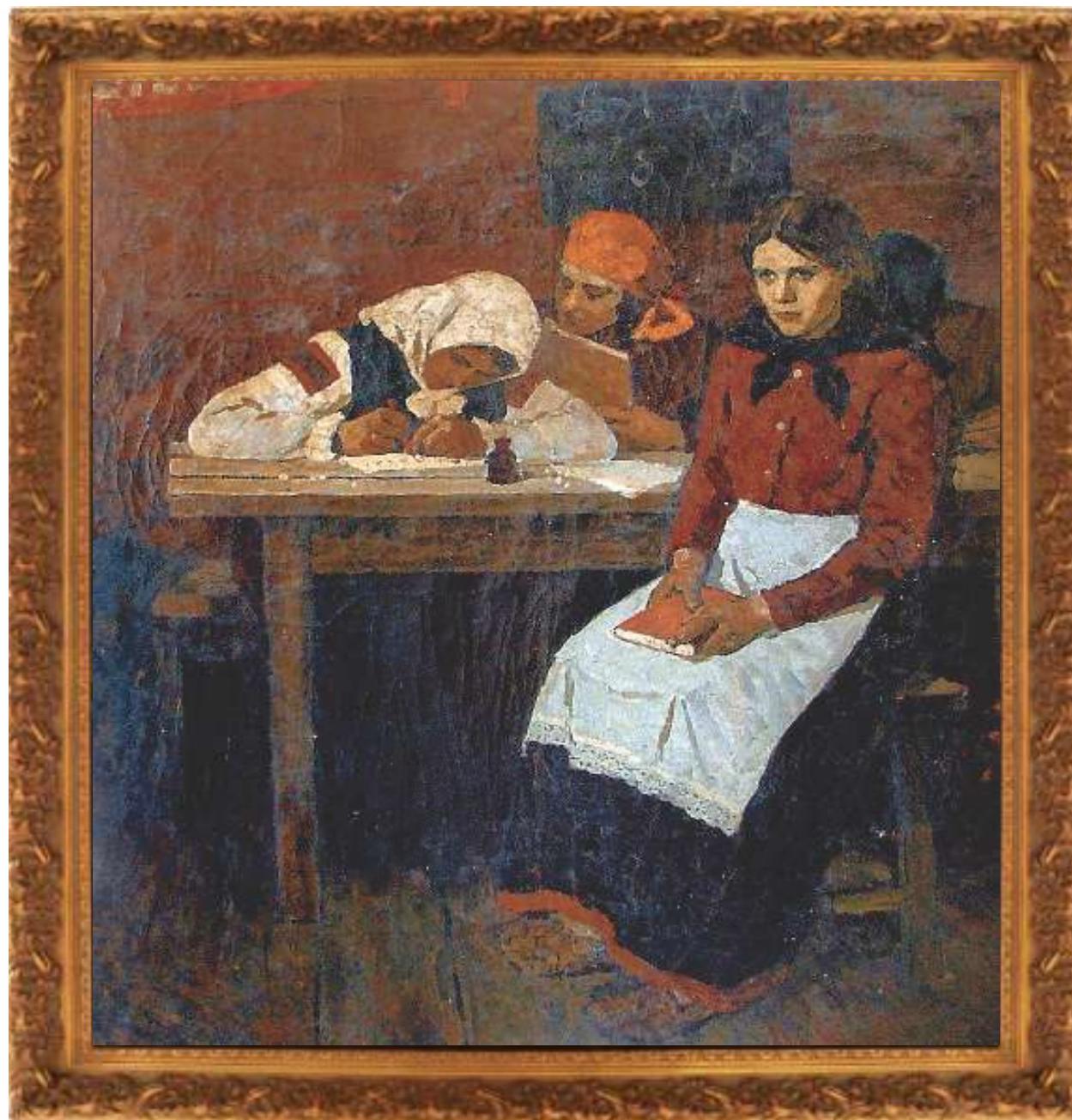
Yuriy Frolov  
*Evening in the country*, 1952  
O/B, 11.5" x 15"



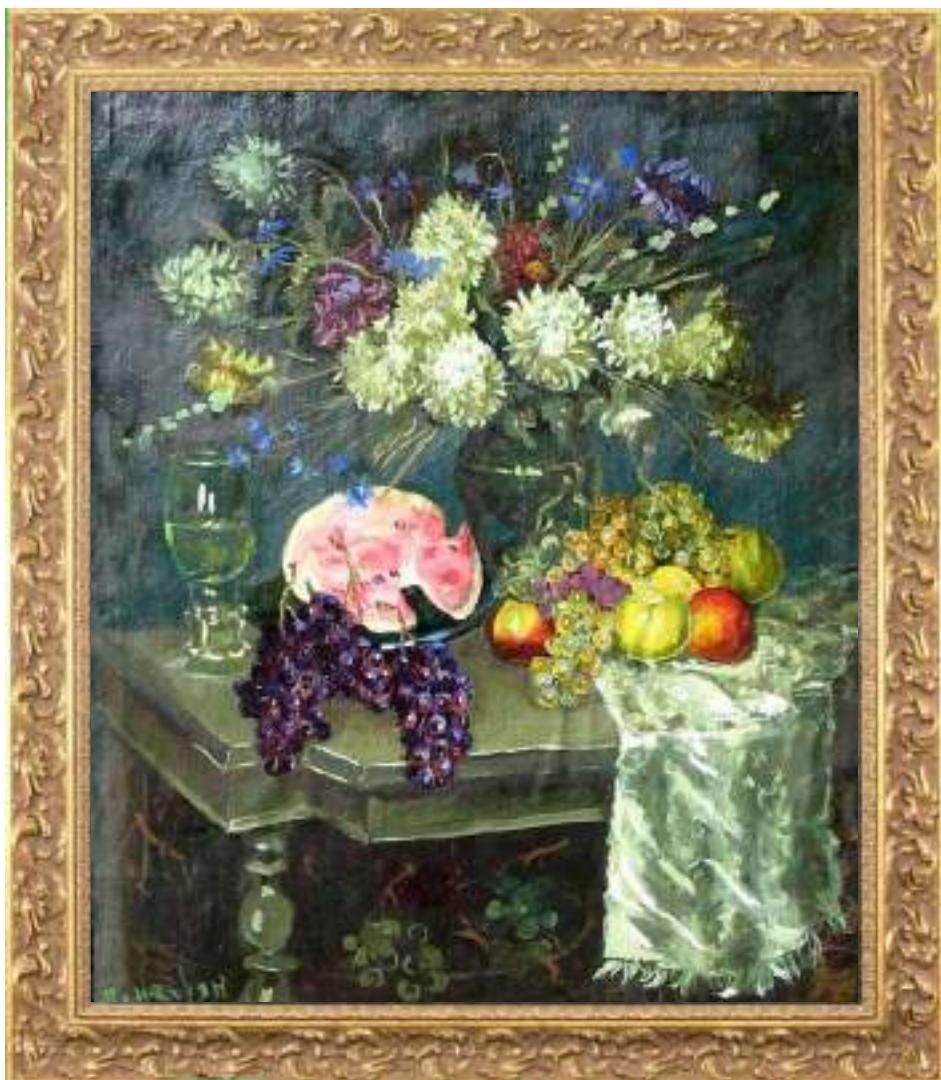
Ekaterina Syromiatnikova  
*Spring*, 1968  
O/B, 16.75" x 10.75"



Yuriy Frolov  
*Conversation*, 1958  
O/B, 19" x 14.5"



Vasiliy Borisenko  
*First Lesson*, 1959  
O/C, 50" x 62"



Vortan Savel Manucharyan  
*Flowers and Fruits*, 1956  
O/C, 33.5" x 39.5"



Yuriy Frolov  
*Artist/Self portrait*, 1951  
O/C, 25.25" x 21"

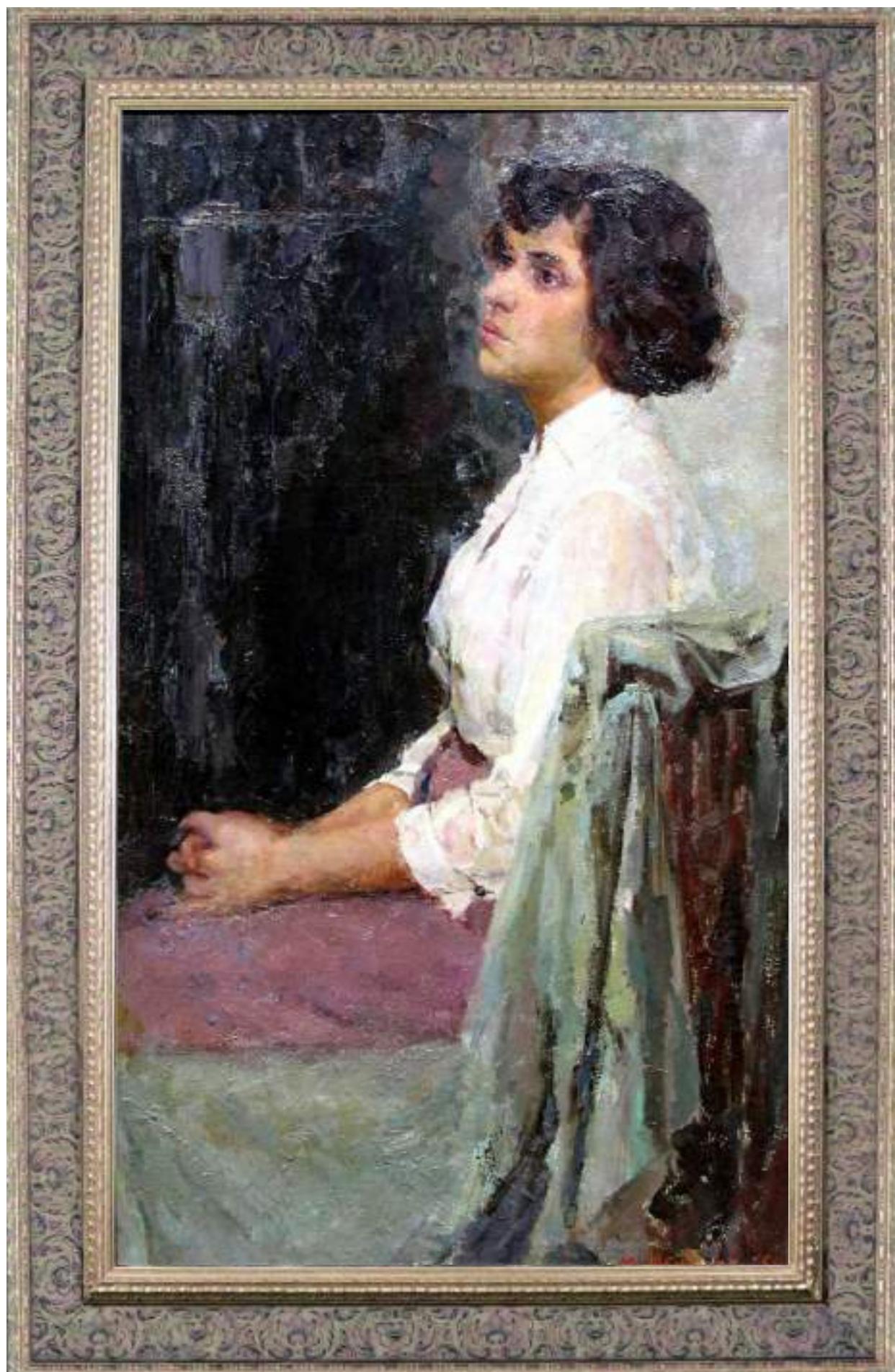


Fedor Glebov  
*Summer Evening In The Country*, 1954  
O/C, 15" x 18"

Andrey Zhirnov  
*Nude*, 1951  
O/C, 43.5" x 27"



Andrey Zhirnov  
*Nude*, 1954  
O/C, 28" x 39"



Mikhail Zhukov  
*Portrait*, 1959  
O/C, 39" x 23"



Yuri Anokhin  
*In the Field*, 1965  
O/B, 15.5" x 22"



Mikhail Fomin  
*Country Man*, 1960  
O/B, 19.25" x 13.5"



Boris Kelberer  
*Portrait of Old Woman*, 1952  
O/B, 7.5" x 10"



Vladimir Kochunov  
*Village Church*, 1952  
O/B, 13.5" x 19.5"



Klavdiya Balanova  
*Old Lady*, 1950  
O/C, 38.5" x 28.5"

Eugeniy Usachev  
*On the Bay*, 1950  
O/B, 5" x 8"



Fedor Glebov  
*Steamship*, 1951  
O/B, 13.75" x 19"

Vladimir Kochunov  
*Woman in Folk Dress*, 1952  
O/C, 17.25" x 23.25"



Boris Diatlov  
*Morning On The Farm*, 1950  
O/B, 13.75" x 19.5"



Vladimir Kochunov  
*On the Farm*, 1952  
O/B, 14" x 19.5"



Mikhail Fomin  
*Young Country Girl*, 1960  
O/B, 18.75" x 13.5"

Ekaterina Belyakova  
*Woman with a flag*, 1950  
O/B, 25" x 16"



Ekaterina Belyakova  
*Father and son*, 1950  
O/B, 25" x 16"



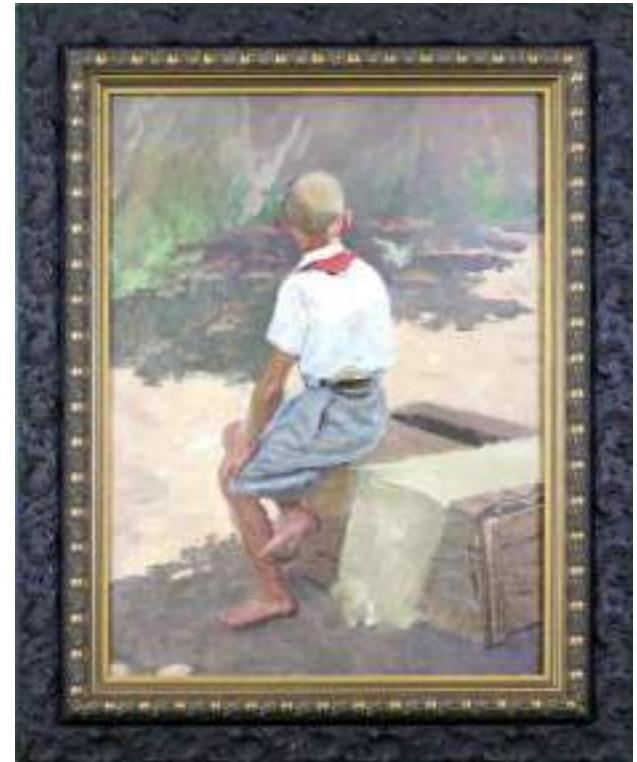
Pyotr Andrianov  
*Early Spring*, 1960  
O/C, 50" x 38"





Anatoliy Luzhskiy  
*Kids on the beach*, 1956  
O/C, 58" x 39"

Viktor Len  
*Pioneer*, 1950  
O/C, 19" x 14.25"



Gennadi Kotov  
*Morning on the sunny street*, 1949  
O/C, 78" x 92"



Evgeniy Zuev  
*The old street*, 1957  
O/B, 23.5" x 19.5"



Viktor Len  
*Fishers*, 1959  
O/B, 17.5" x 11.5"

Viktor Len  
*Freighter with a pipe*, 1951  
O/C, 19.5" x 21"



Ivan Lezhnin  
*On the Pier*, 1952  
O/B, 21" x 25.25"



Vladimir Baryshkov  
"Musya", 1960  
O/C, 27" x 16"



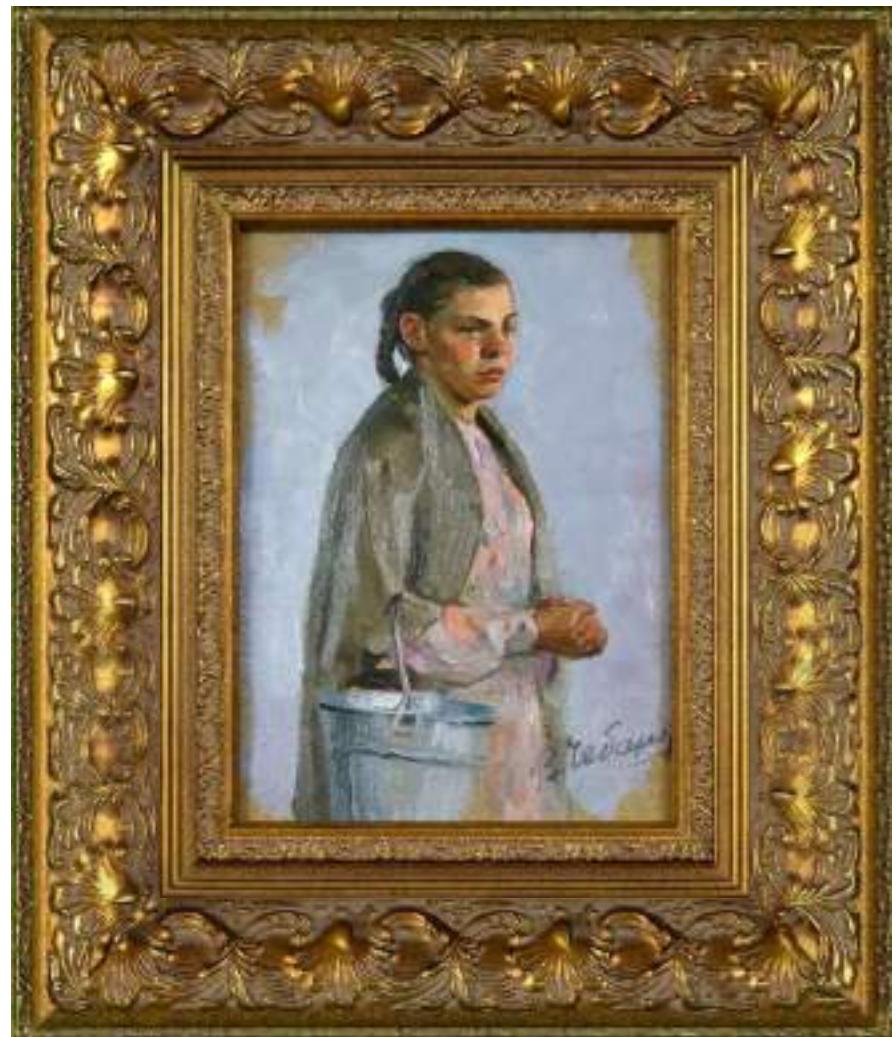
Spartak Gorinov  
*The Portrait of L. Egidis*, 1956  
O/C, 20.25" x 36.25"



Yurii Kozlov  
*Woman by the window*, 1958  
O/C, 20" x 26.5"



Eugeniy Usachev  
*Landscape*, 1951  
O/B, 6.5" x 13.5"



Veniamin Chebanov  
*Young Girl*, 1957  
O/B, 12.25" x 10"

Grigoriy Kravchenko  
*Home work*, 1952  
O/C, 31.5" x 23.5"



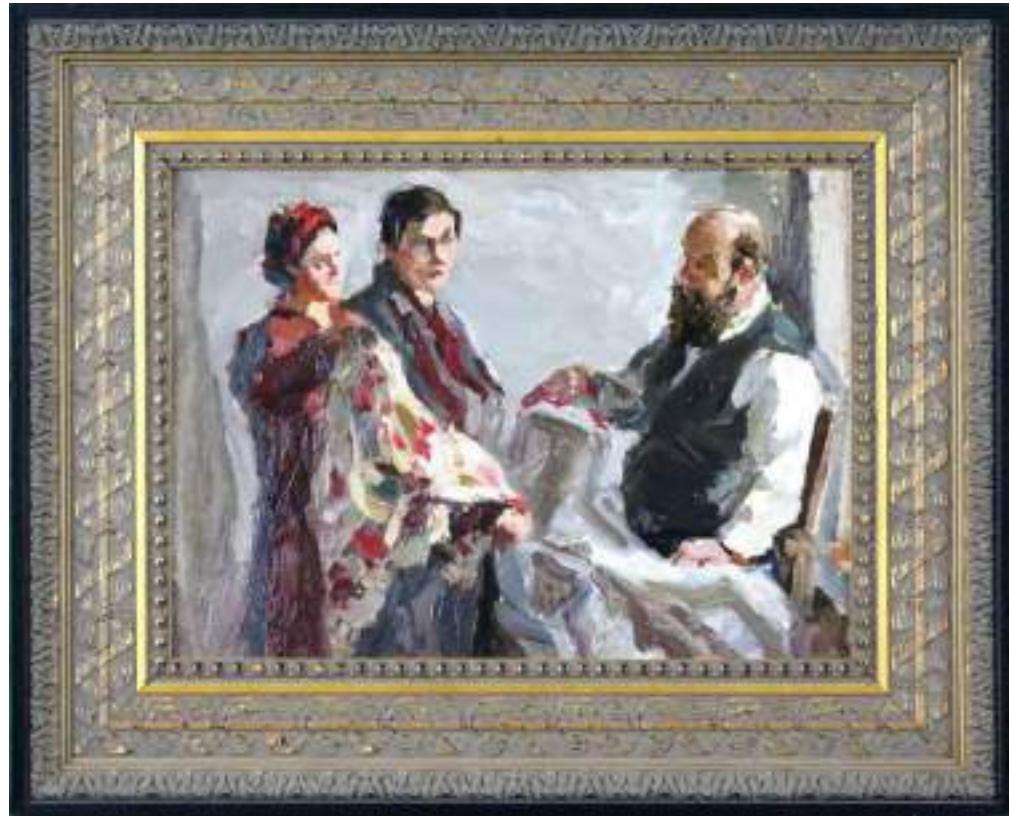


Iosif Belonovich  
*Stranger*, 1959  
O/B, 27.5" x 21.25"



Aleksandr Egidis  
*Self-Portrait*, 1967  
O/C, 55" x 36"

Eleonora Zharenova  
*Sketch*, 1954  
O/B, 13" x 9.5"



Boris Diatlov  
*Rural Fair*, 1952  
O/C, 17" x 27"



Ilya Kats  
*Lenin In the Countryside*, 1962  
O/C, 40" x 48"

Viktor Puzyrkov  
*Stalin on the Cruiser Molotov*, 1949  
O/C, 46.5" x 77.5"

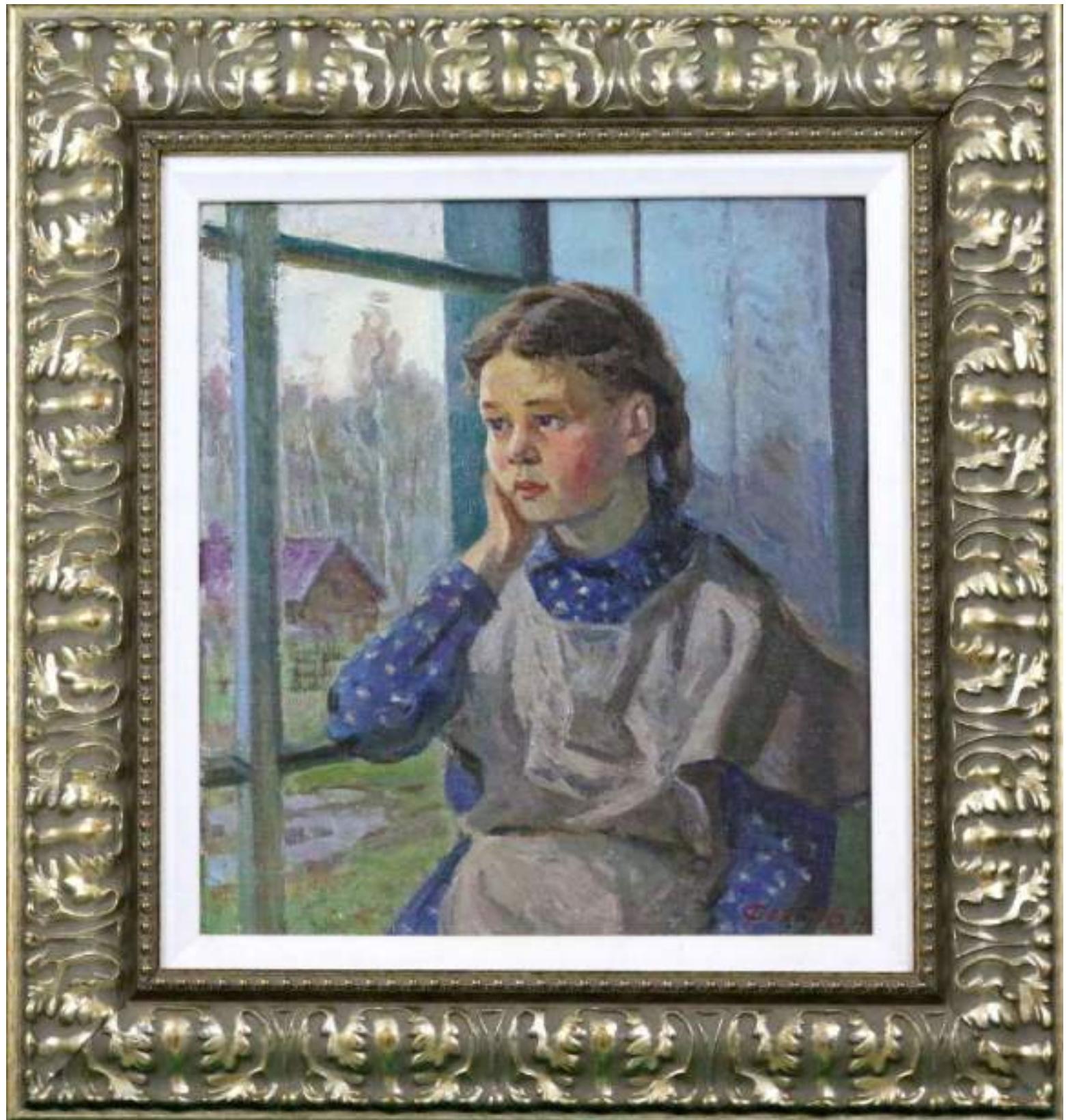




Vladimir Kochunov  
*On the Kazanka River*, 1964  
O/B, 14" x 19.5"



Roza Davityan  
*Ship in the port*, 1950  
O/C, 14" x 31"



Yuriy Frolov  
*By The Window*, 1961  
O/C, 16.5" x 15"

Yuriy Kugach  
*Portrait of artist Semeon Skoptsov*, 1950  
O/C, 20.5" x 12.75"



Ardalion Kusmin  
*Arstrakhans View*, 1954  
O/B, 14.5" x 21.5"



Vladimir Kochunov  
*Asiya*, 1959  
O/C, 28.25" x 22"

Veniamin Chebanov  
*Soldier*, 1955  
O/B, 12.25" x 8.5"



Oleg Bordei  
*Study with a Flag*, 1950  
O/C, 13.5" x 23.25"



Veniamin Chebanov  
*Country Girl*, 1955  
O/B, 10.75" x 7.75"



Evgeniy Charski  
*Young Woman*, 1949  
O/B, 18" x 10.25"

Dmitriy Dolmanskiy  
*Girl in the blue beret*, 1958  
O/C, 22" x 29"



Spartak Gorinov  
*Tatiana*, 1968  
O/C, 43.5" x 32.5"



Klavdiya Balanova  
*Etude*, 1950  
O/C, 38.5" x 28.5"

Iosif Belonovich  
*Nude*, 1950  
O/C, 33" x 24.5"





Klavdiya Balanova  
*Nude*, 1952  
O/C, 43.25" x 27.5"



Vasiliy Kashkurev  
*Nude*, 1953  
O/C, 20" x 31"



Aleksei Varlamov  
*Russian Tsar On The Volga River*, 1946  
O/C, 57" x 76.5"

Fedor Glebov  
*Port of Odesa, 1970*  
O/B, 8.75" x 13.75"



Andrey Zhirnov  
*Holiday in the Village, 1955*  
O/C, 18" x 39"



Evgeniy Zuev  
*Still Life*, 1966  
O/B, 23.5" x 16.5"



Viktor Letyanin  
*Flowers*, 1959  
O/C, 17" x 27.5"

Veniamin Kudryashov  
*The Head Of The KGB*, 1965  
O/C, 35" x 27.5"



Aleksandr Michurin  
*Alexander's Monument*, 1960  
O/C, 13" x 19"





Gregory Kravchuk  
*Bouquet*, 1959  
O/B, 17.5" x 19"



Gregory Koklushkin  
*Portrait of a woman*, 1953  
O/C, 13" x 23.5"



Viktor Krechetov  
*Two Sisters*, 1966  
O/C, 31" x 38.5"

Yuri Vinogradov  
*Driver*, 1964  
O/B, 12.75" x 18.75"



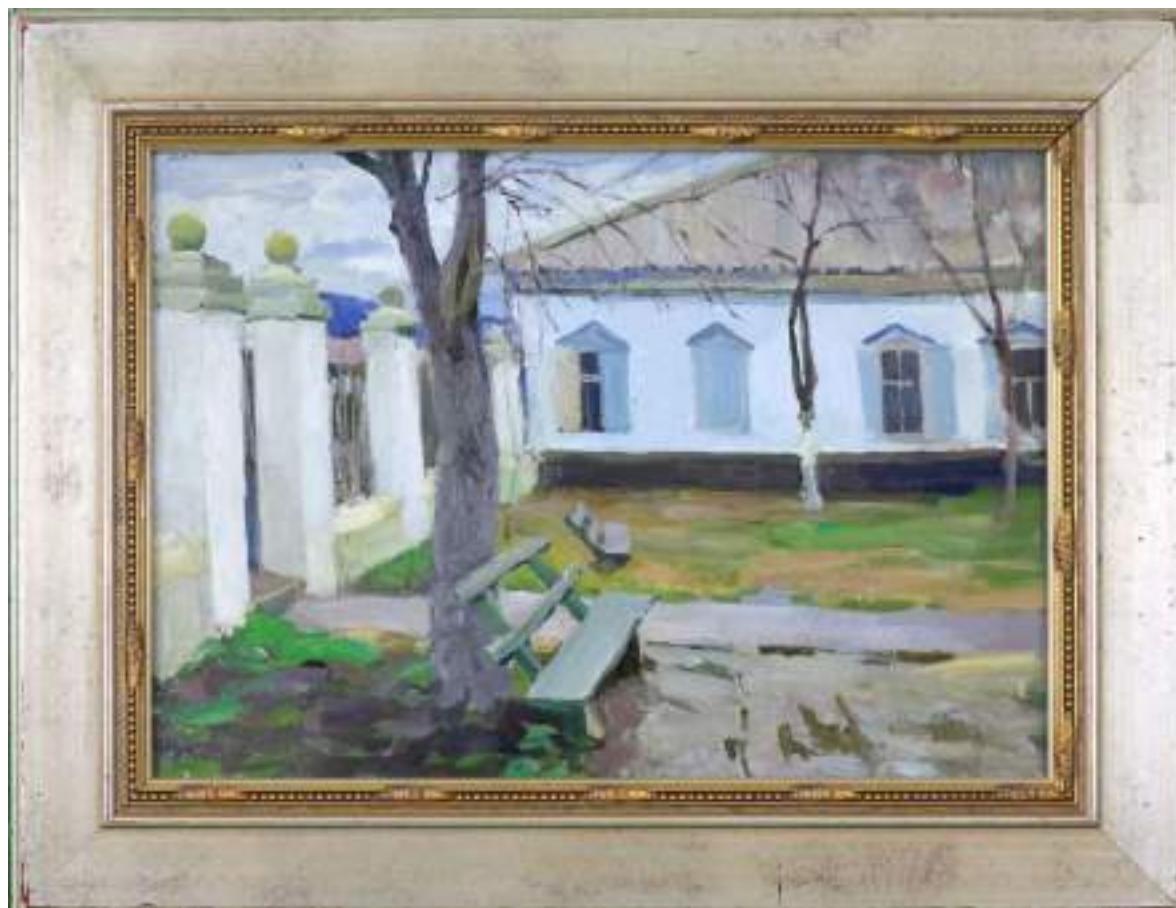
Boris Kelberer  
*Pioneer*, 1950  
O/C, 10" x 7"



Vasiliy Strigin  
*Rainy Day*, 1955  
O/B, 16.75" x 21"

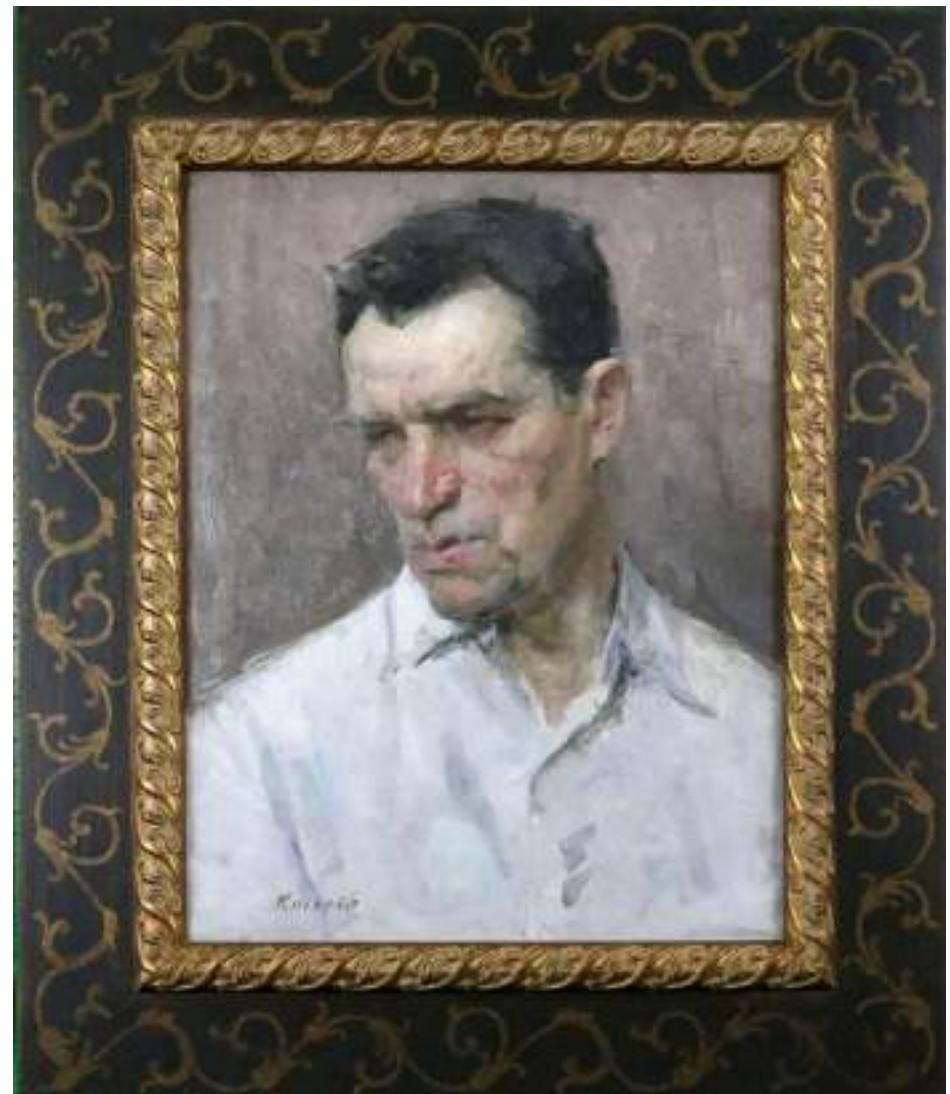


Dimitriy Shmelev  
*In The Courtyard*, 1960  
O/C, 14" x 19.5"





Vladimir Gorski  
*Maia*, 1949  
O/B, 7" x 9"



Georgiy Kiselev  
*Male model*, 1959  
O/C, 14.5" x 19"



Anatoliy Markov  
*Evening in the village*, 1968  
O/B, 12" x 18"



Valeri Lebedev  
*Zvenigorod*, 1969  
O/B, 9.5" x 11.5"



Sergei Glushkov  
*Spring Is Coming*, 1960  
O/C, 38" x 40"





Anatoliy Luzhskiy  
*On the Potato Field* 1959  
O/C 39" x 58"



Ekaterina Belyakova  
*Flirt*, 1950  
O/B, 25" x 16"



Aleksey Motorin  
*Student*, 1967  
O/B, 20" x 31"



Iya Novi  
*Young Pioneer*, 1954  
O/C, 21" x 25"



Fedor Konyakhin  
*Portrait Of A Sailor*, 1959  
O/B, 27.25" x 19.5"



Dimitriy Shmelev  
*Spring Landscape*, 1960  
O/B, 14" x 19.5"

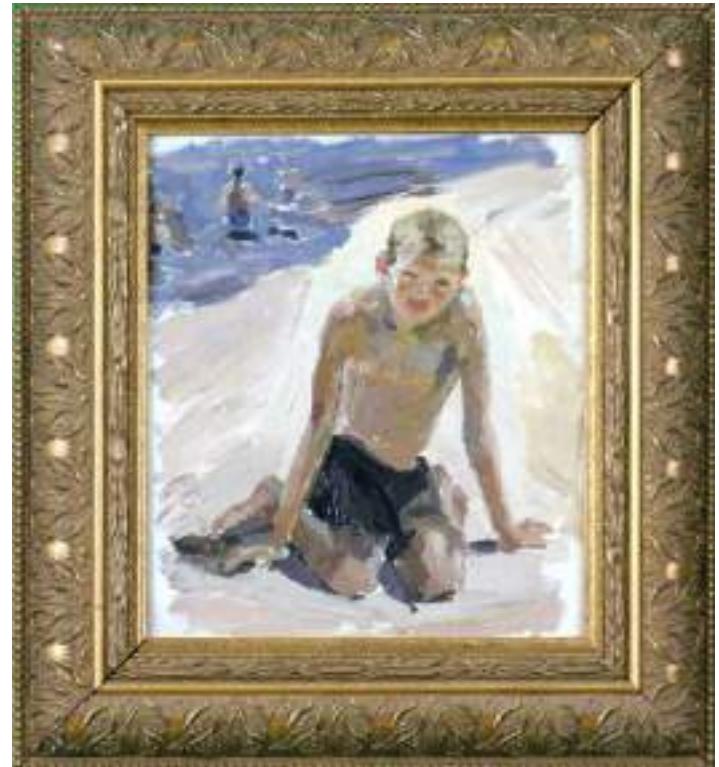


Dimitriy Shmelev  
*Self-Portrait*, 1968  
O/C, 24" x 27"

Boris Gladchenko  
*In The Country*, 1970  
O/C, 33.5" x 25.5"



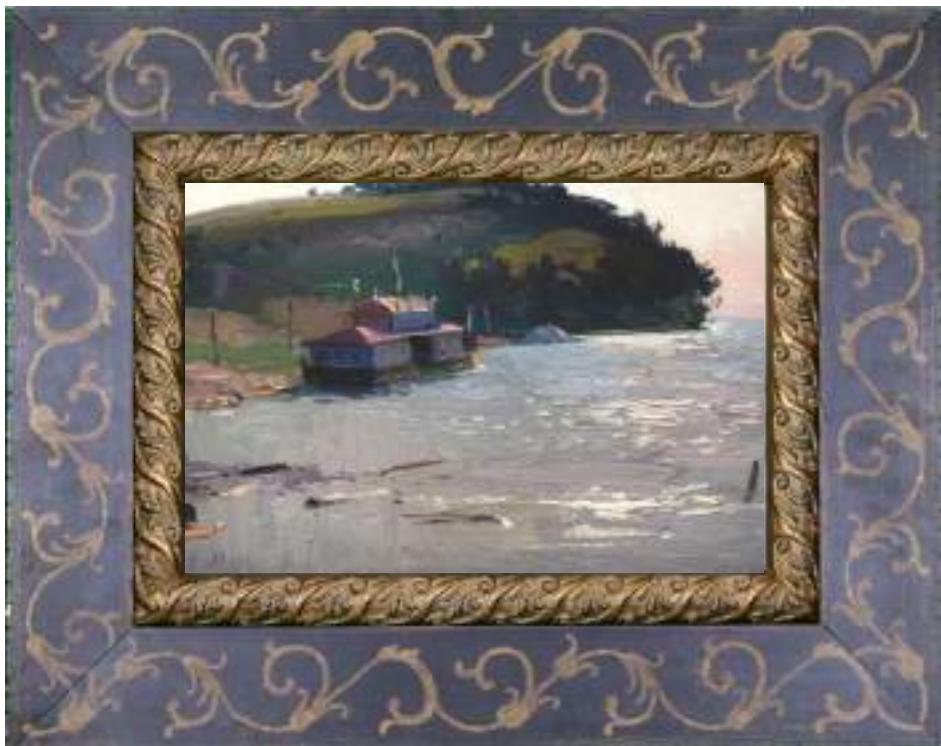
Vladimir Kochunov  
*Before Performance*, 1954  
O/B, 13.5" x 19"



Eleonora Zharenova  
*Boy on the Beach*, 1952  
O/B, 8.5" x 10"



Evgeny Khoroshilov  
*Seaman*, 1955  
O/C, 24.75" x 18.5"



Aleksey Motorin  
*Uliyanovsk*, 1952  
O/B, 9.25" x 13.25"



Ekaterina Syromiatnikova  
*On the Volga River*, 1961  
O/B, 27.5" x 16"

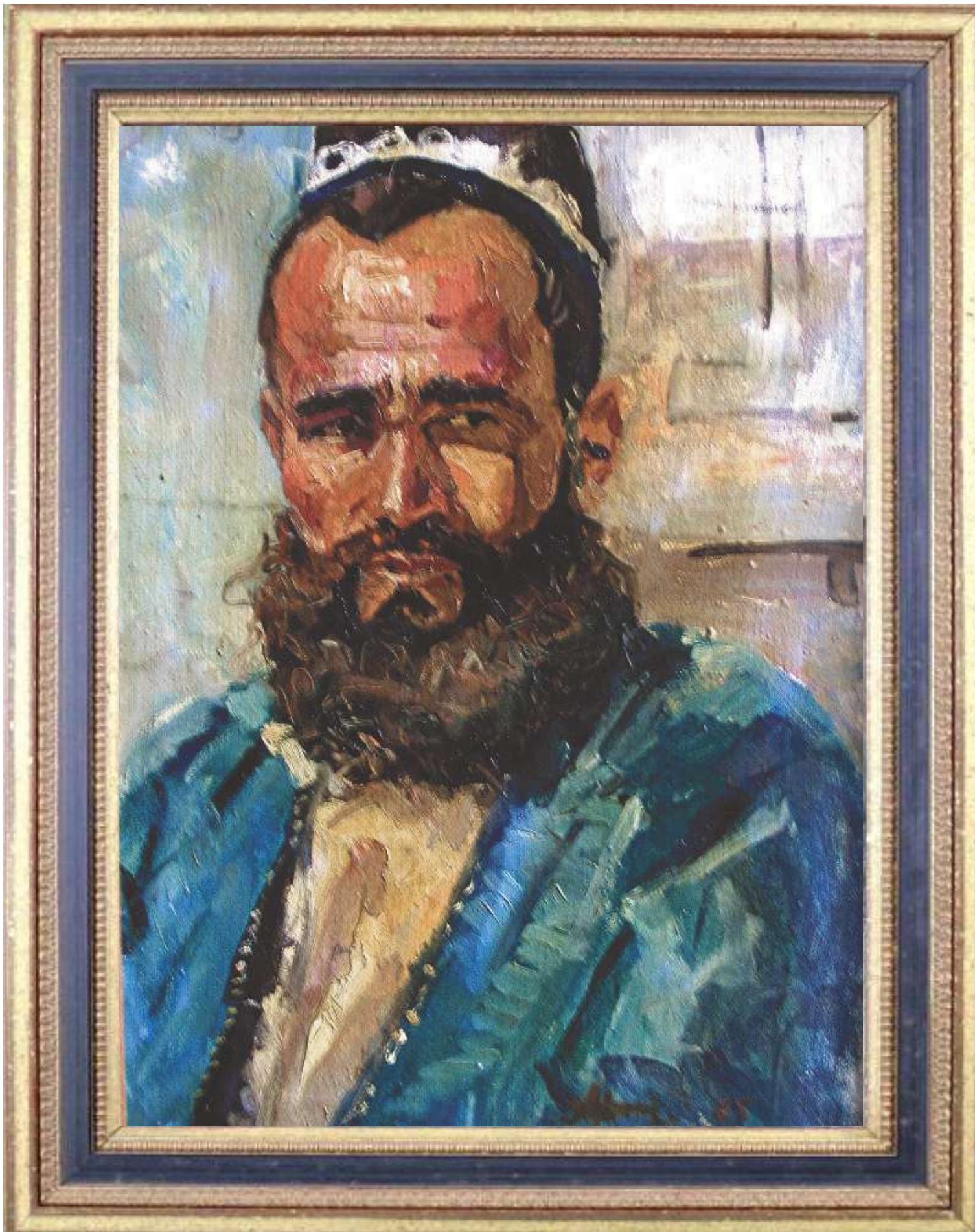


Semen Skoptsov  
*Sleepless Nights*, 1958  
O/C, 27.5" x 55"

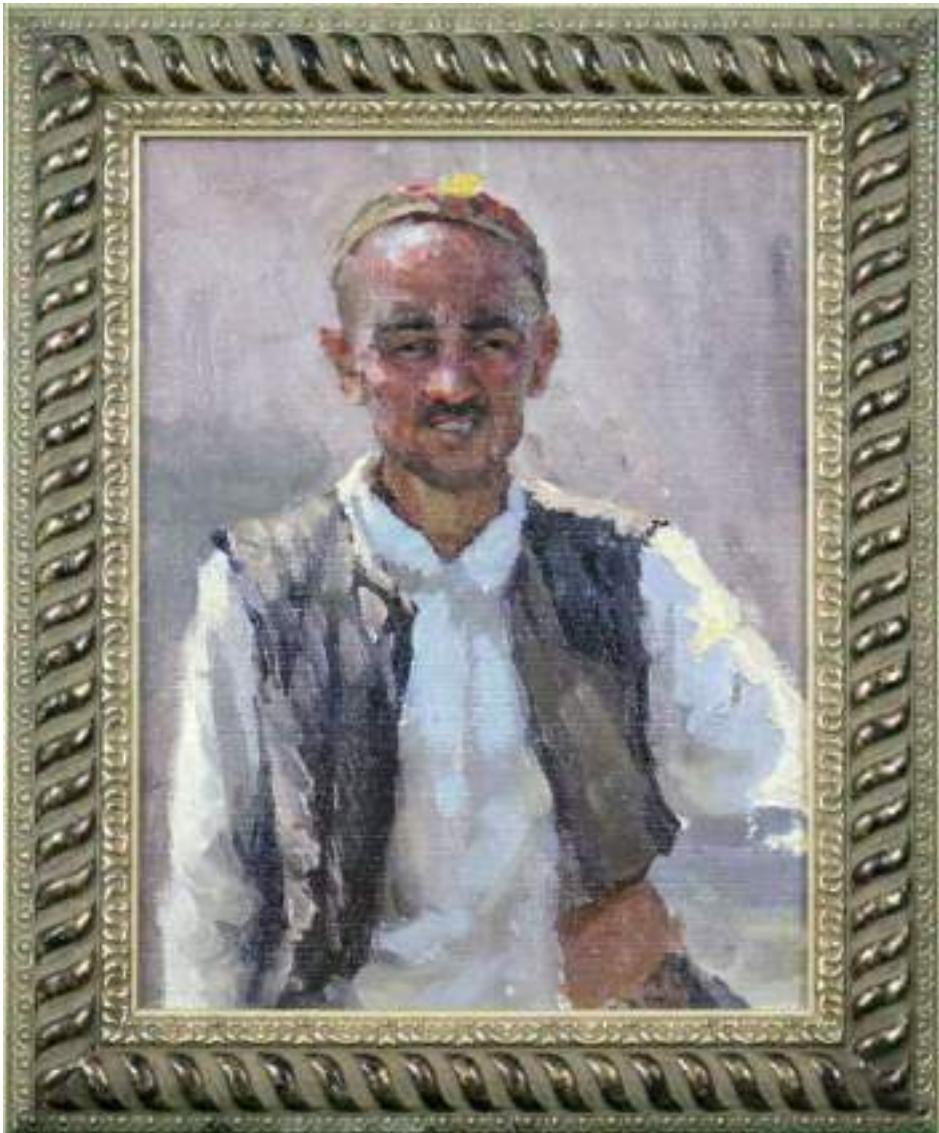




Mikhail Kamanin  
*Floating The Logs*, 1965  
O/C, 39" x 21.5"



Nikolai Matasov  
*Portrait Of A Man*, 1965  
O/B, 23" x 17"



Nikolai Matasov  
*Student*, 1965  
O/C, 13.25" x 10.2"

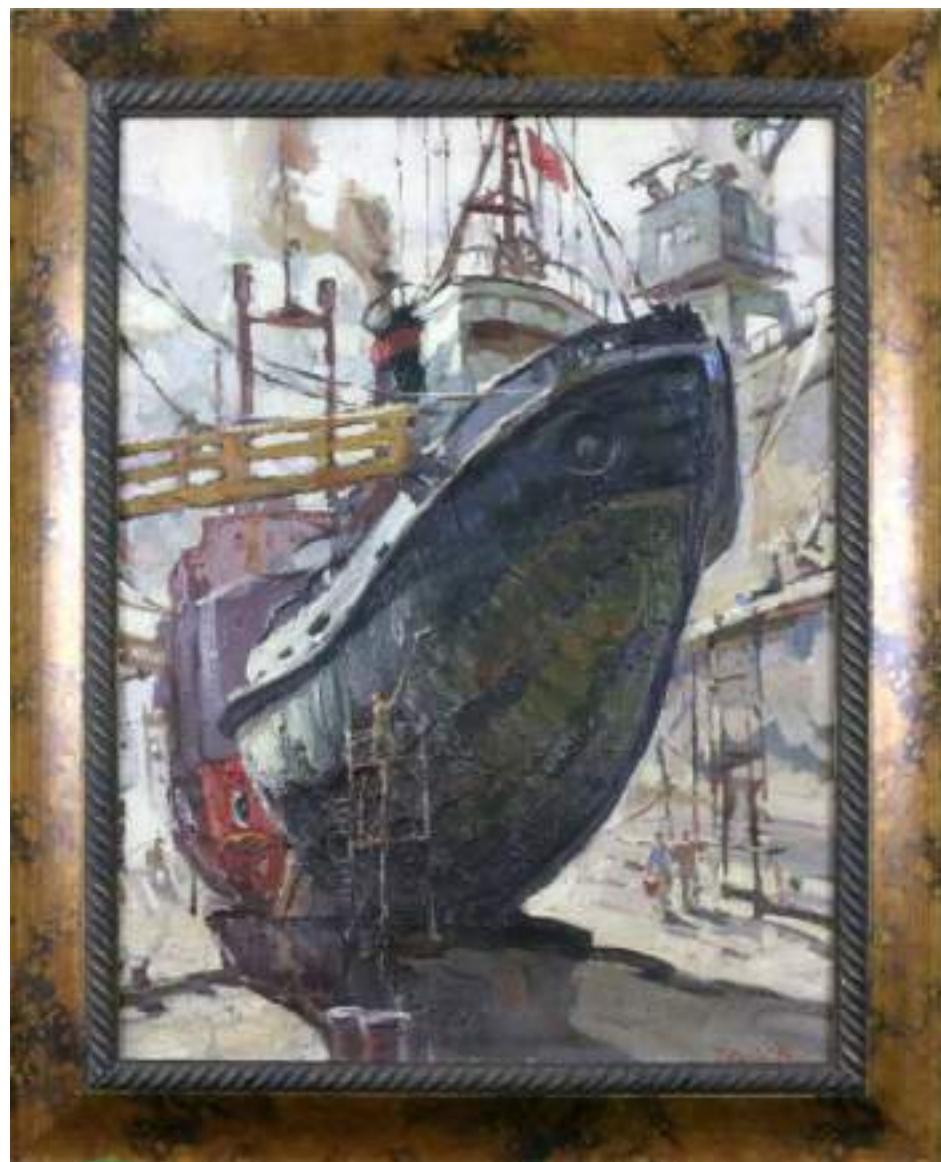


Yuriy Frolov  
*Far In The Day*, 1961  
O/C, 9.5" x 13.5"



Grigoriy Goncharov  
*Trainee*, 1969  
O/B, 27" x 19.5"

Mikhail Utkin  
*In The Port*, 1954  
O/C, 23" x 33"



Izrail Ashkenazi  
*Portrait of the Actress*, 1952  
O/C, 15" x 19.5"



Nikolai Silaev  
*Famous Folk Singer Saveleva*, 1968  
O/C, 41" x 29.5"



Ryazel Taivo  
*The mood*, 1951  
O/C, 9.5" x 6"



Aleksandr Sukhov  
*High Water*, 1957  
O/C, 25.5" x 39.3"



Valentina Globina  
*Debut*, 1955  
O/C, 23.5" x 40"

Viktor Len  
*Cossack Girl*, 1960  
O/C, 29.5" x 19.75"



Veniamin Chebanov  
*Officer*, 1956  
O/B, 11.5" x 8.5"



Aleksei Prokopenko  
*Nurse*, 1968  
O/C, 29" x 36.5"



Eugeniy Usachev  
*Young Soldier*, 1953  
O/C, 9.5" x 12.5"

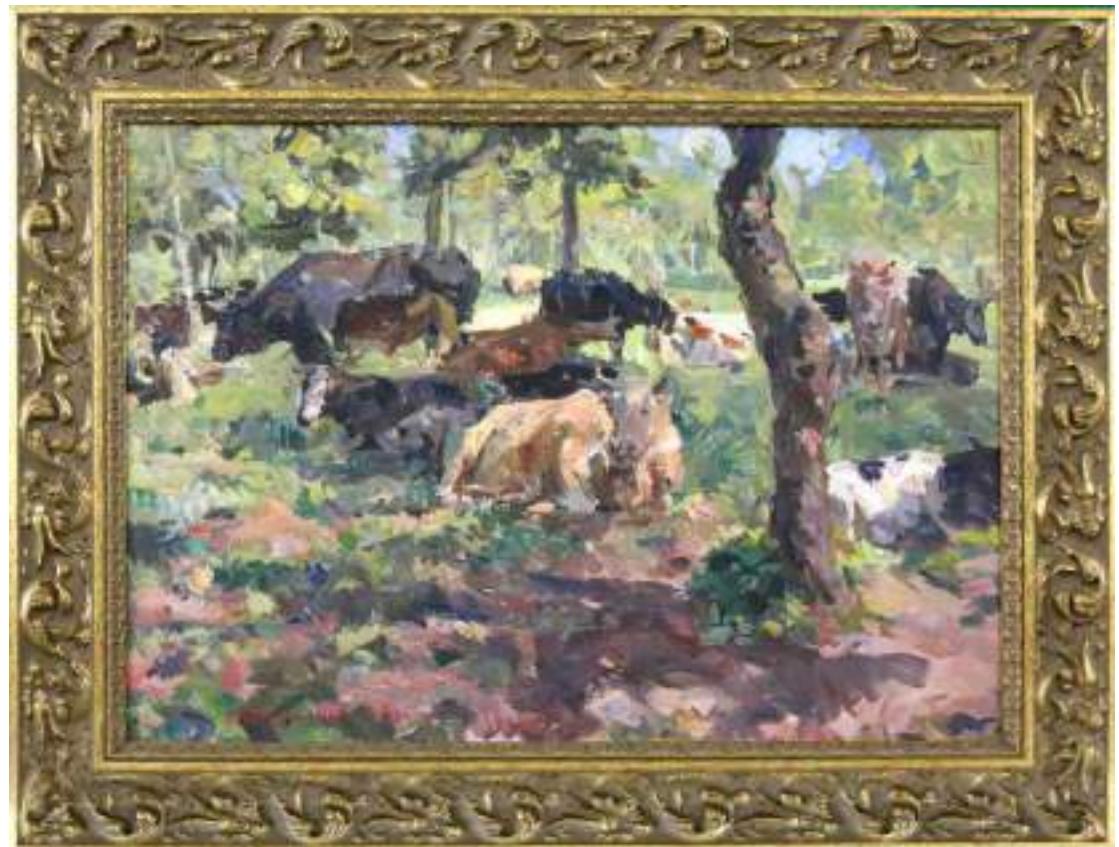


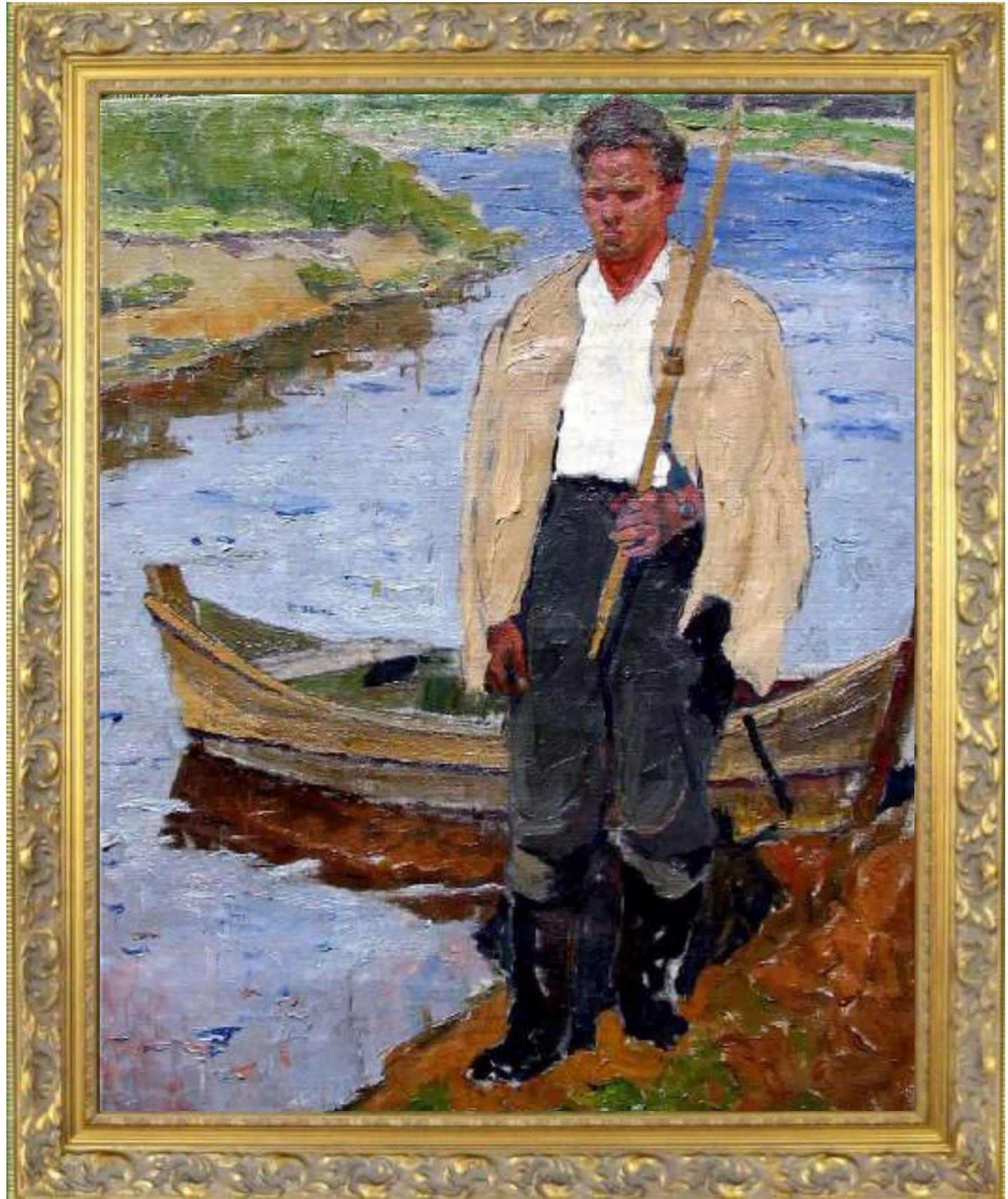
Vladimir Kochunov  
*Donkeys*, 1968  
O/B, 13.75" x 18.75"

Grigoriy Chernoskutov  
*Beginning of the Fall*, 1949  
O/C, 17.5" x 13.25"



Pyotr Andrianov  
*Summer morning*, 1968  
O/B, 27.5" x 19.5"





Vladimir Lagun  
*Fisherman*, 1957  
O/C, 39" x 31.5"

Aleksey Motorin  
*On the Volga River*, 1956  
O/B, 13.25" x 7"



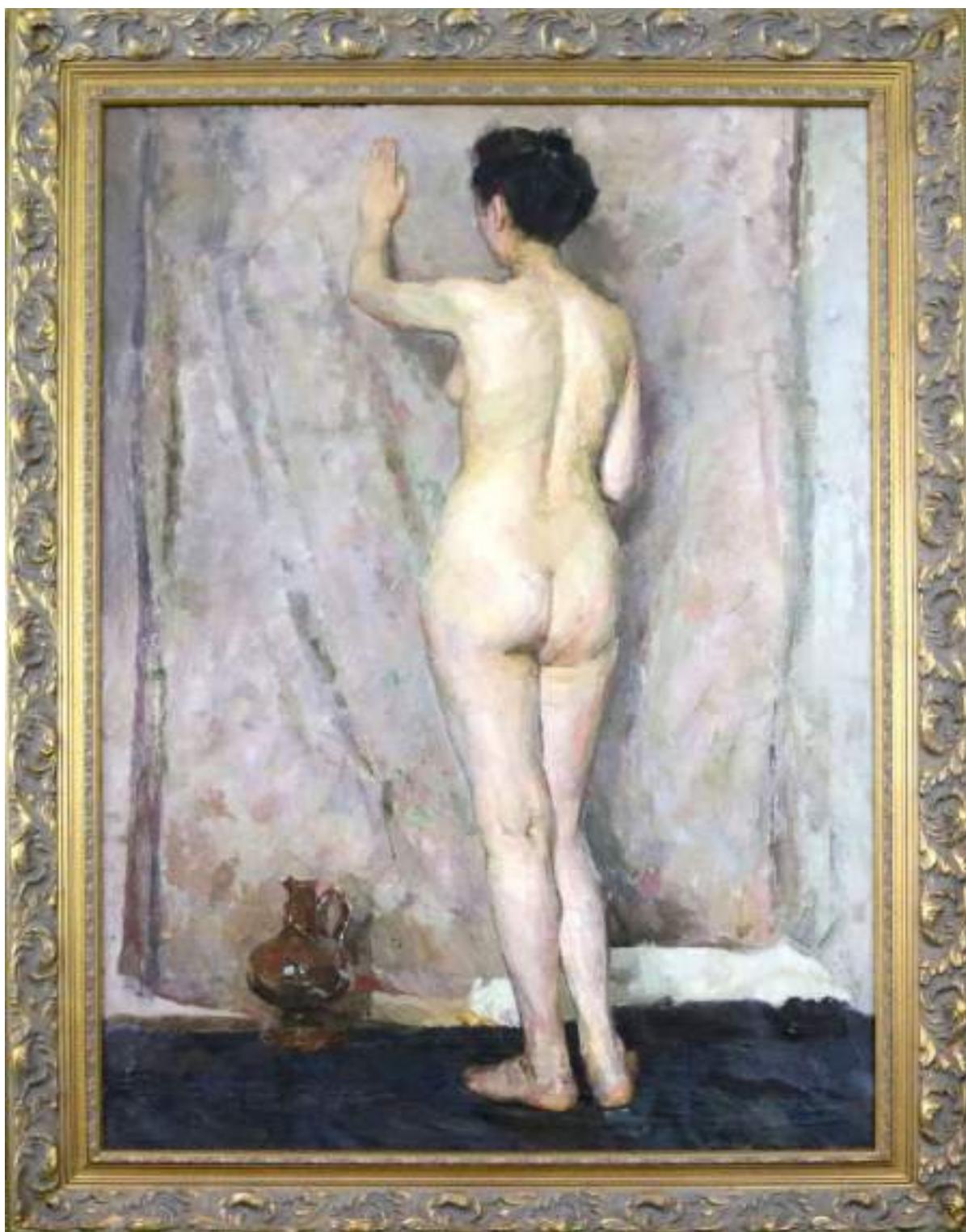
Aleksei Prokopenko  
*Letter From The Front*, 1978  
O/C, 39.25" x 47"



Fedor Glebov  
*Pilot*, 1944  
O/B, 11" x 13.5"



Gennadiy Troshkin  
*Sunny Day*, 1960  
O/C, 16" x 12.5"



Evgeniy Charski  
*Nude*, 1960  
O/C, 26.5" x 37.25"

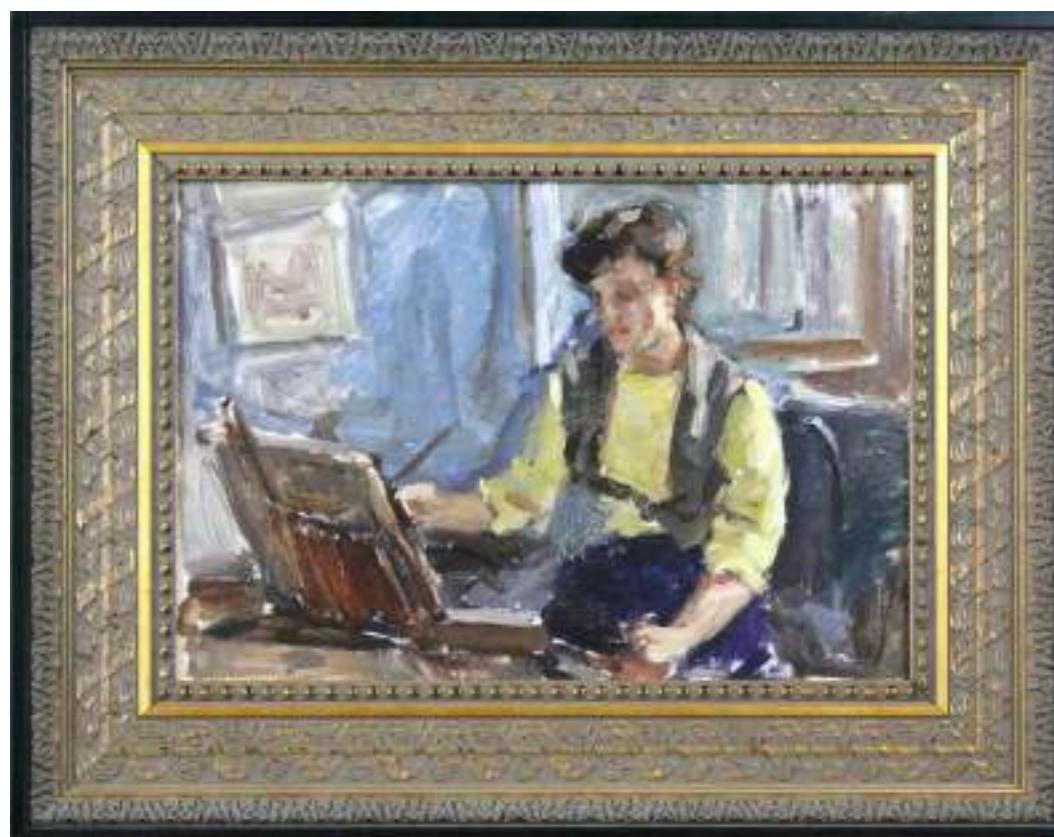


Andrey Zhirnov  
*Two nude models*, 1959  
O/C, 50.5" x 35"

Aleksandr Egidis  
*Student Girl*, 1969  
O/B, 19.5" x 25.5"



Eleonora Zharenova  
*Artist Rita*, 1949  
O/B, 13" x 9.5"





Nikolai Pudovkin  
*Brigadier*, 1970  
O/B, 19.75" x 29"



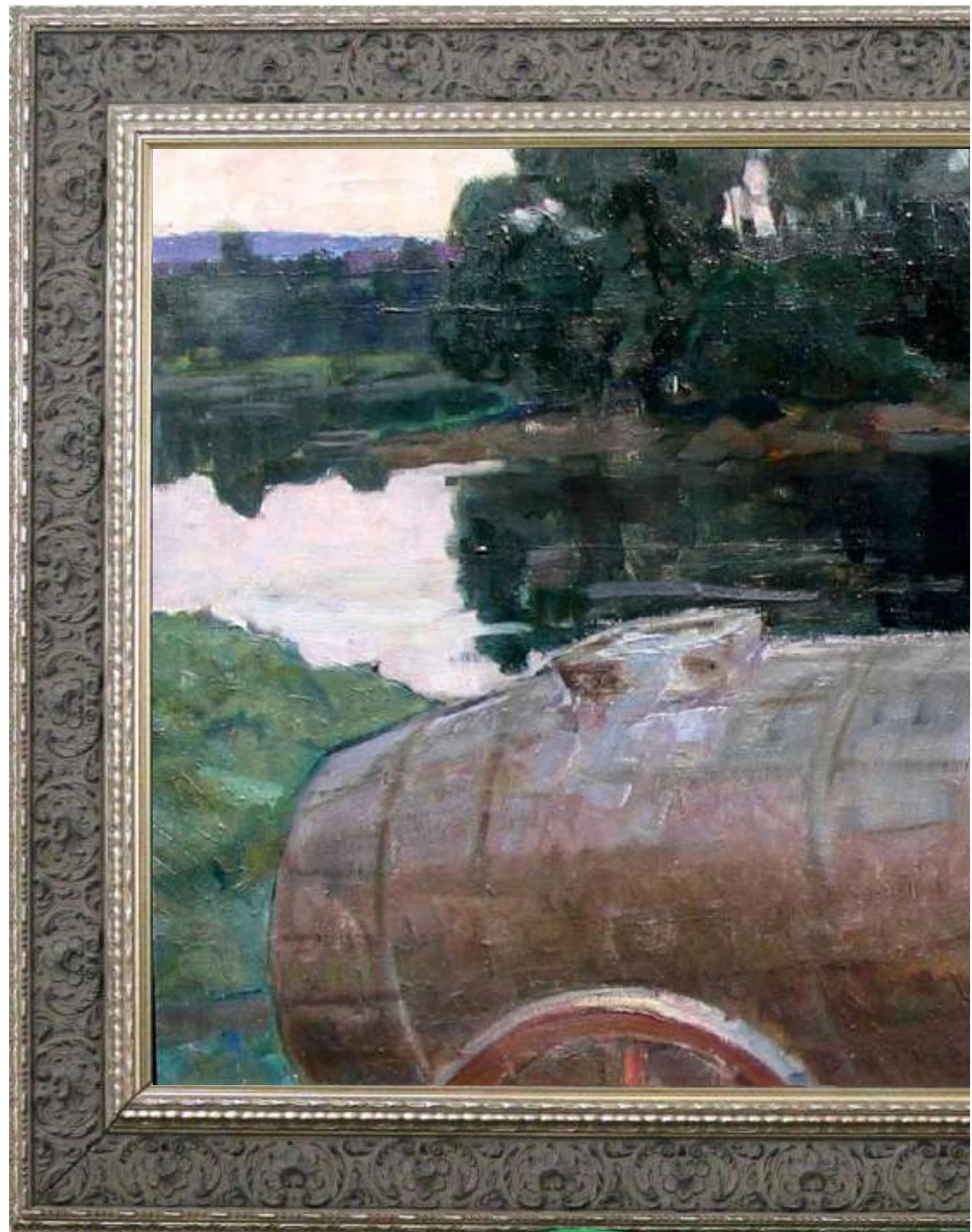
Anatoliy Markov  
*On The Construction Site*, 1960  
O/B, 13" x 19"

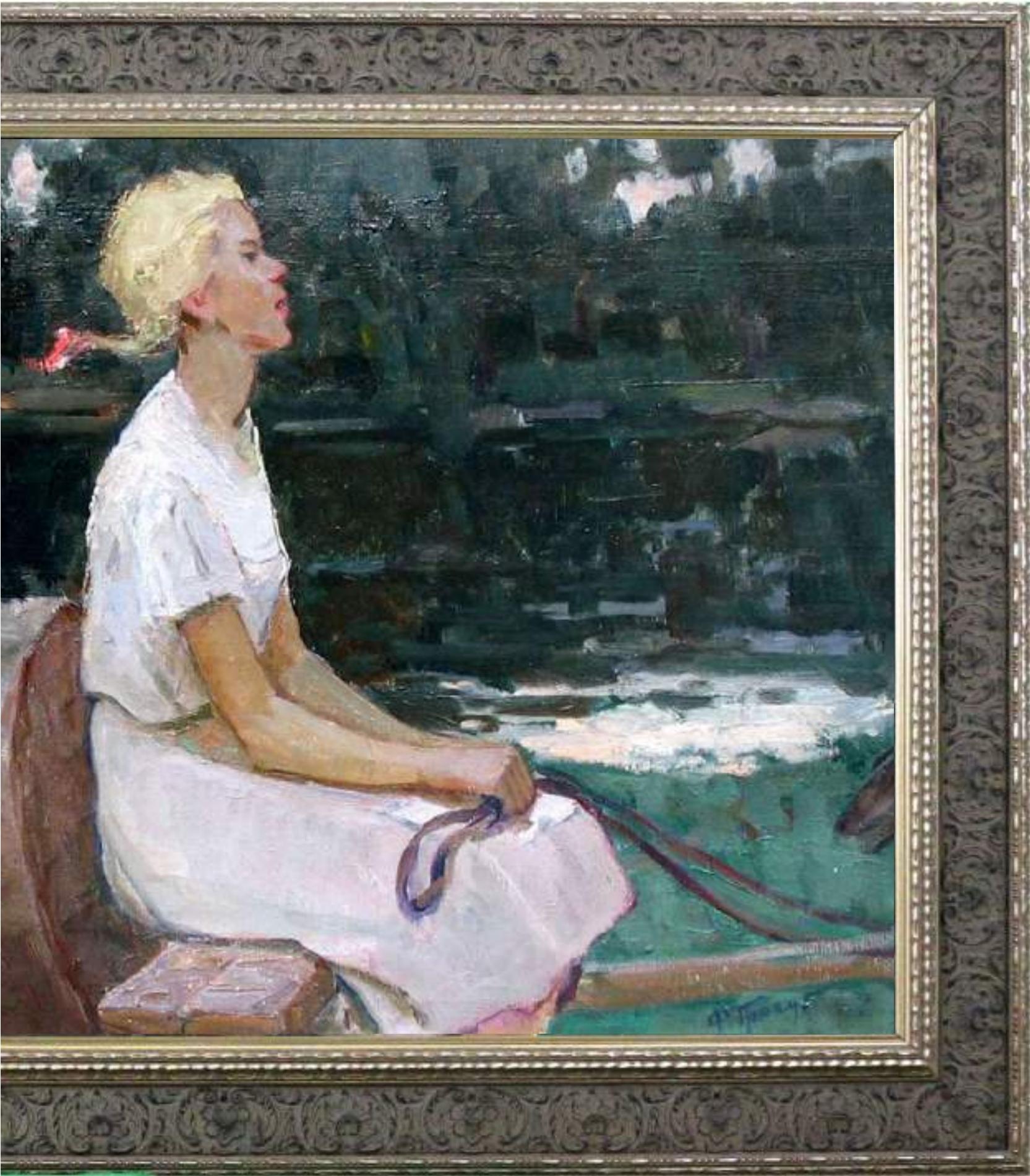


Ivan Lezhnin  
*Prorub*, 1956  
O/B, 19.5" x 27.5"



Mikhail Fomin  
*Country Woman*, 1956  
O/C, 28.5" x 22.5"





Fedor Tregub, 1958  
*Shurka Riding a Water Cask*  
O/C, 24 x 44.5

Viktor Letyanin  
*Gypsy*, 1960  
O/C, 15" x 12.5"



Amir Valiakhmetov  
*Country Men*, 1959  
O/B, 15.5" x 19"



Iya Novi  
*Strawberries*, 1958  
O/B, 13" x 28"



Tomaz Tsulaya  
*Rich Harvest*, 1968  
O/C, 46.5" x 35"

Eugeniy Usachev  
*Girl in Red*, 1959  
O/C, 17" x 23"



Nadezhda Chernikova  
*Still Life with Flowers*, 1968  
O/C, 19.5" x 29.5"



Ivan Yazev  
*Portrait Of A Girl With A Book*, 1966  
O/C, 27.5" x 19.75"

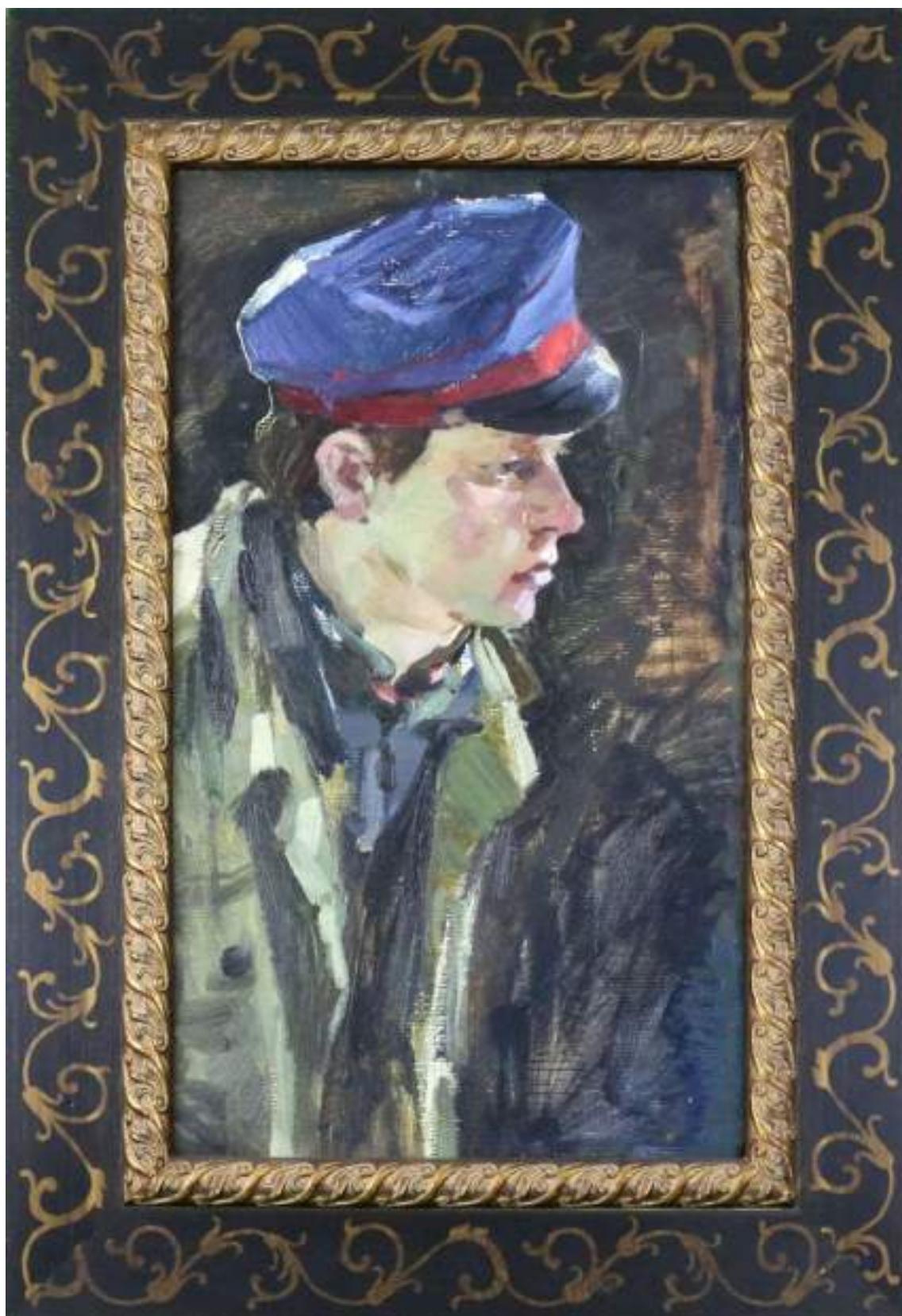


Nikolai Ivanov  
*Winter in the village*, 1972  
O/C, 31" x 31.5"

Yuriy Frolov  
*Winter in the Village*, 1960  
O/B, 10" x 14"



Vitali Sidorov  
*Portrait of Kazak Avdeev*, 1984  
O/C, 32" x 36"



Vladimir Kochunov  
*Driver*, 1965  
O/B, 14.25" x 24.25"

Mikhail Utkin  
*Freezing*, 1968  
O/C, 31" x 45"



Ivan Aristov  
*Girl*, 1968  
O/B, 15.75" x 12.75"



Vasiliy Kashkurev  
*Tsar Ivan The Terrible*, 1956  
WC/P, 30" x 19"





Vladimir Telnov  
*Pugachev On The Volga River*, 1969  
O/C, 39" x 58.5"



Aleksandr Egidis  
*Revolutionary man*, 1968  
O/C, 25.25" x 27.25"



Nikolai Ivanov  
*Landscape With Mountains*, 1968  
O/B, 27.25" x 18.75"

Nikolai Matasov  
*The Street*, 1961  
O/B, 27.5" x 19.25"



Yuriy Frolov  
*Children*, 1962  
O/C, 15.5" x 29"

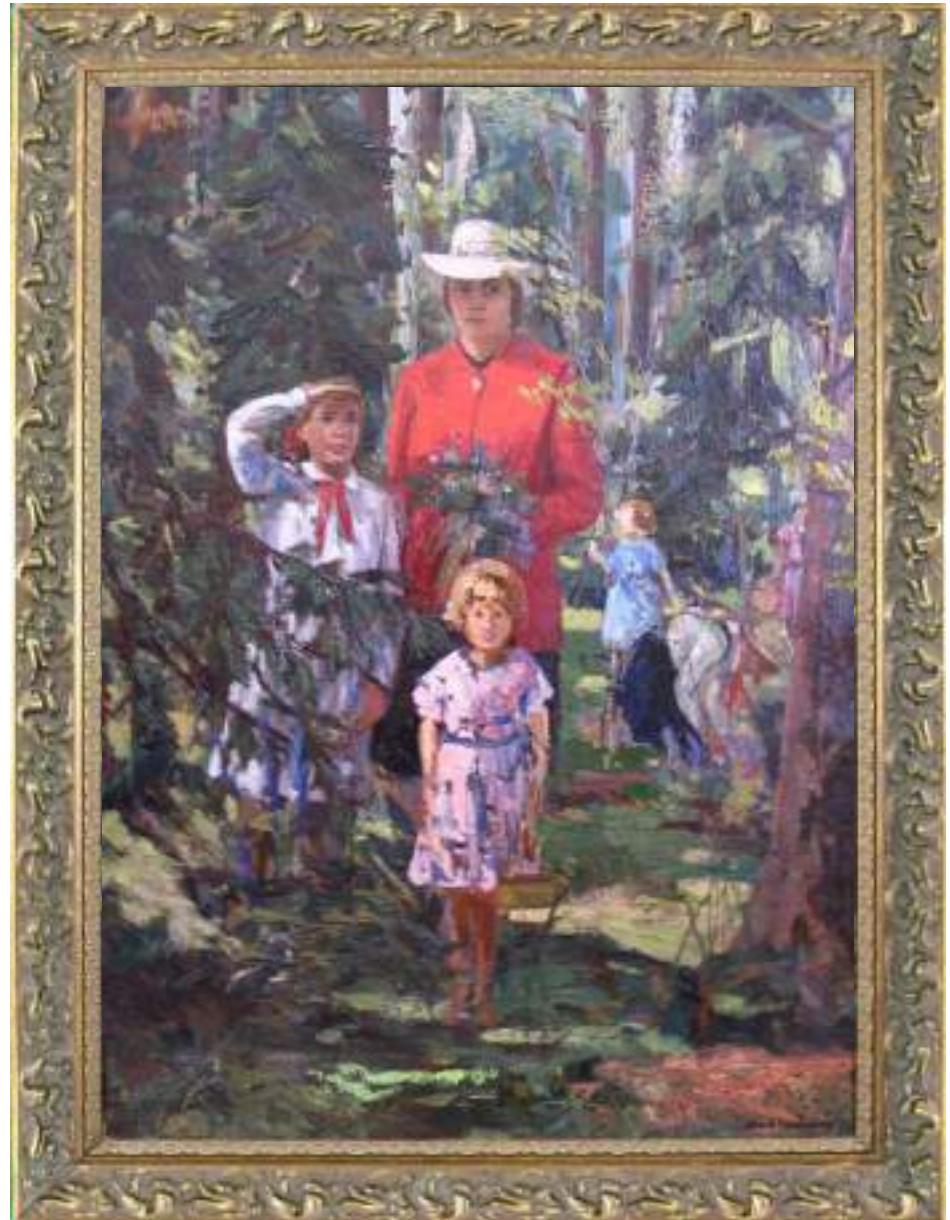




Aleksey Motorin  
*Children on the window*, 1958  
O/C, 34" x 48"



Grigoriy Kravchenko  
*Sleeping baby*, 1959  
O/B, 13.5" x 19.25"



Mikhail Dovgyallo  
*Children In The Forest*, 1970  
O/C, 43.5" x 29.5"



Spartak Gorinov  
*The Portrait of Young Woman*, 1961  
O/C, 19.25" x 27.25"

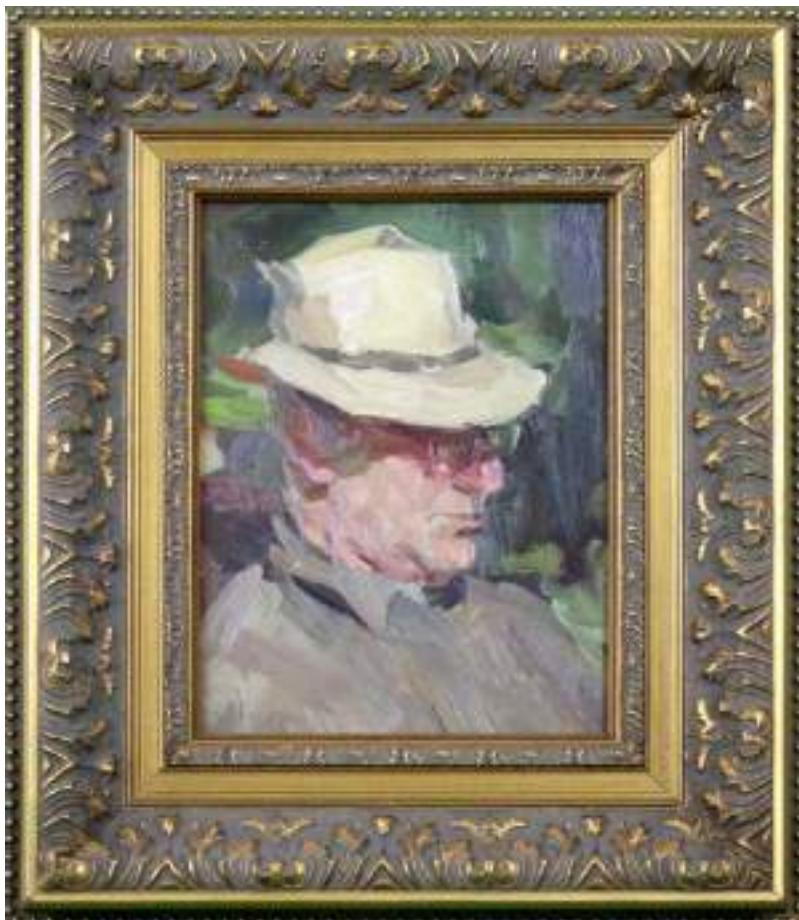


Aleksey Motorin  
*The Portrait of Student*, 1964  
O/B, 10.25" x 13.25"

Ivan Aristov  
*Man*, 1965  
O/C, 15.75" x 12.75"



Pavel Porotnikov  
*Old Mill*, 1961  
O/C, 15.75" x 27.25"



Lyudmila Skubko-Karpas  
*Portrait of Mr. Fridenberg*, 1957  
O/B, 12.5" x 8.25"



Fedor Doroshevich  
*Hero of Soviet Labor*, 1971  
O/C, 41.5" x 48"



Boris Diatlov  
*Home Lessons*, 1950  
O/C, 47" x 39"



Boris Diatlov  
*Country Girl*, 1956  
O/C, 23" x 17"

Aleksey Motorin  
*Evening in the field*, 1951  
O/C, 12" x 19"





Eugeniy Usachev  
*Evening landscape with Cows*, 1962  
O/B, 27" x 18"



Spartak Gorinov  
*Natali*, 1948  
O/B, 12.25" x 16.25"



Fedor Konyakhin  
*Portrait Of A Young Girl with accordion*, 1960  
O/C, 24" x 29.5"



Semen Skoptsov  
*Portrait Of A. Mitrofanov*, 1955  
O/C, 35.5" x 23.5"



Yuriy Petrov  
*Man In Hungarian Costume*, 1959  
O/B, 19.5" x 13.5"



Tatyana Marchenko  
*Portrait of a writer*, 1957  
O/C, 31.25" x 25.25"



Mikhail Suzdaltsev  
*A Striding One*, 1953  
O/C, 26" x 16.75"



Ardalion Kusmin  
*Fishing Boats*, 1958  
O/C, 17.75" x 24.25"



Veniamin Kudryashov  
*Spring*, 1969  
O/C, 47" x 49"



Vasiliy Tereschenko  
*Woman In Folk Costume*, 1955  
O/C, 23" x 30.25"

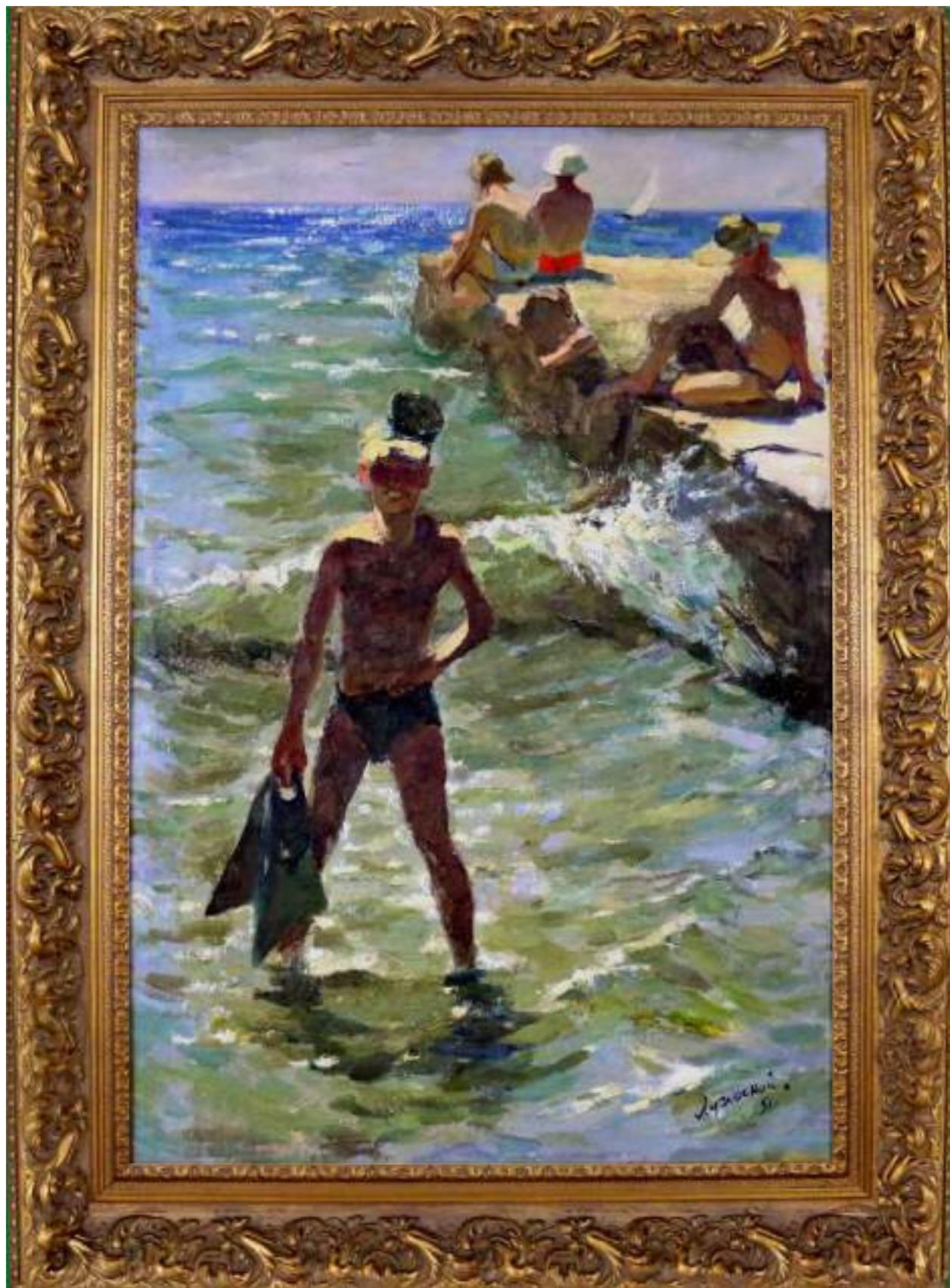


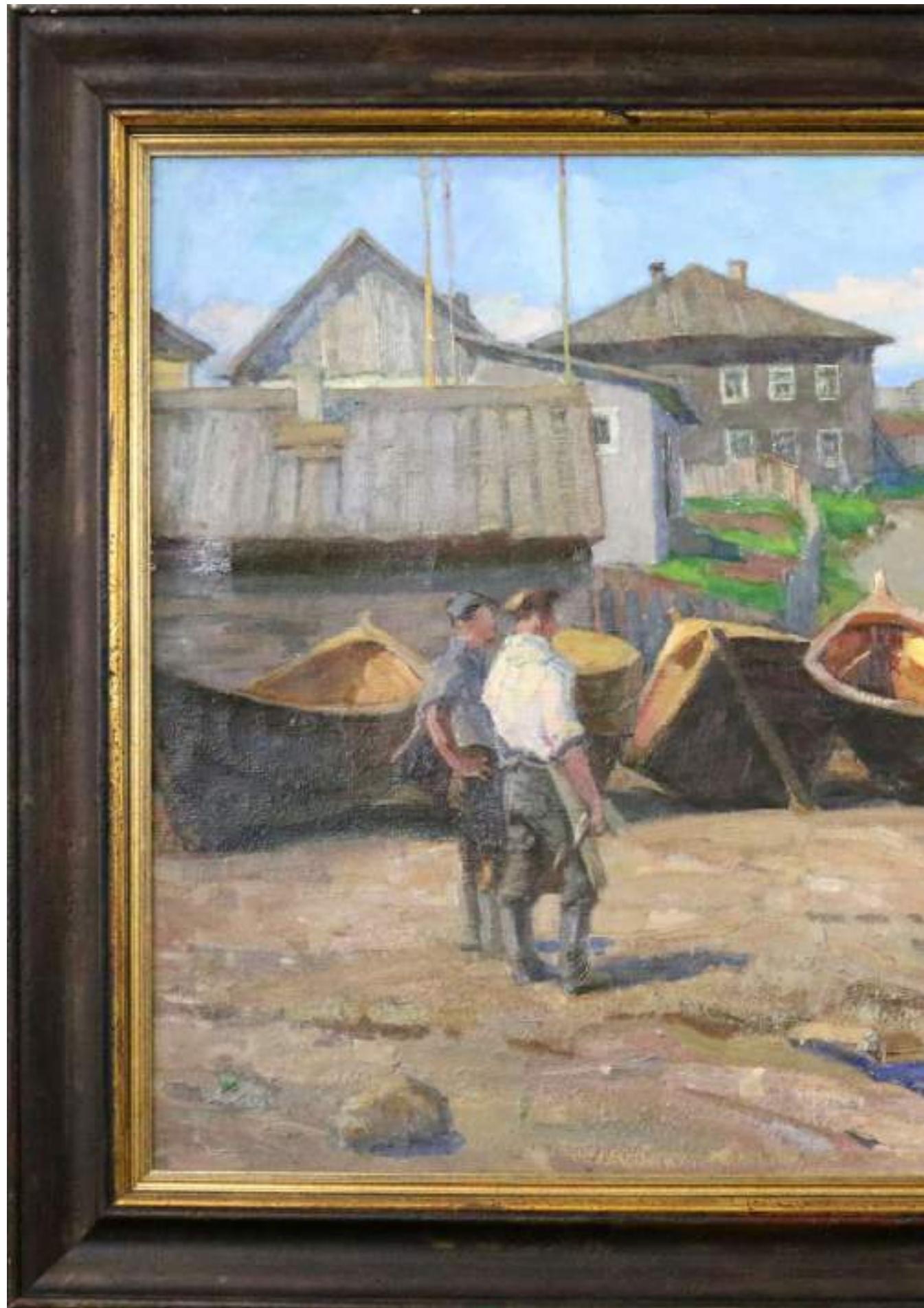
Viktor Onischenko  
*Summer on the Lake*, 1966  
O/C, 52" x 61.5"

Boris Sporykhin  
*Returning to Service*, 1955  
O/C, 21.5" x 32.5"



Anatoliy Luzhskiy  
*By the ocean*, 1951  
O/C, 32" x 47"







Ekaterina Syromiatnikova  
*New Boats*, 1965  
O/C, 25.5" x 39.5"

Aleksey Motorin  
*First Snow*, 1952  
O/B, 9.5" x 15.5"



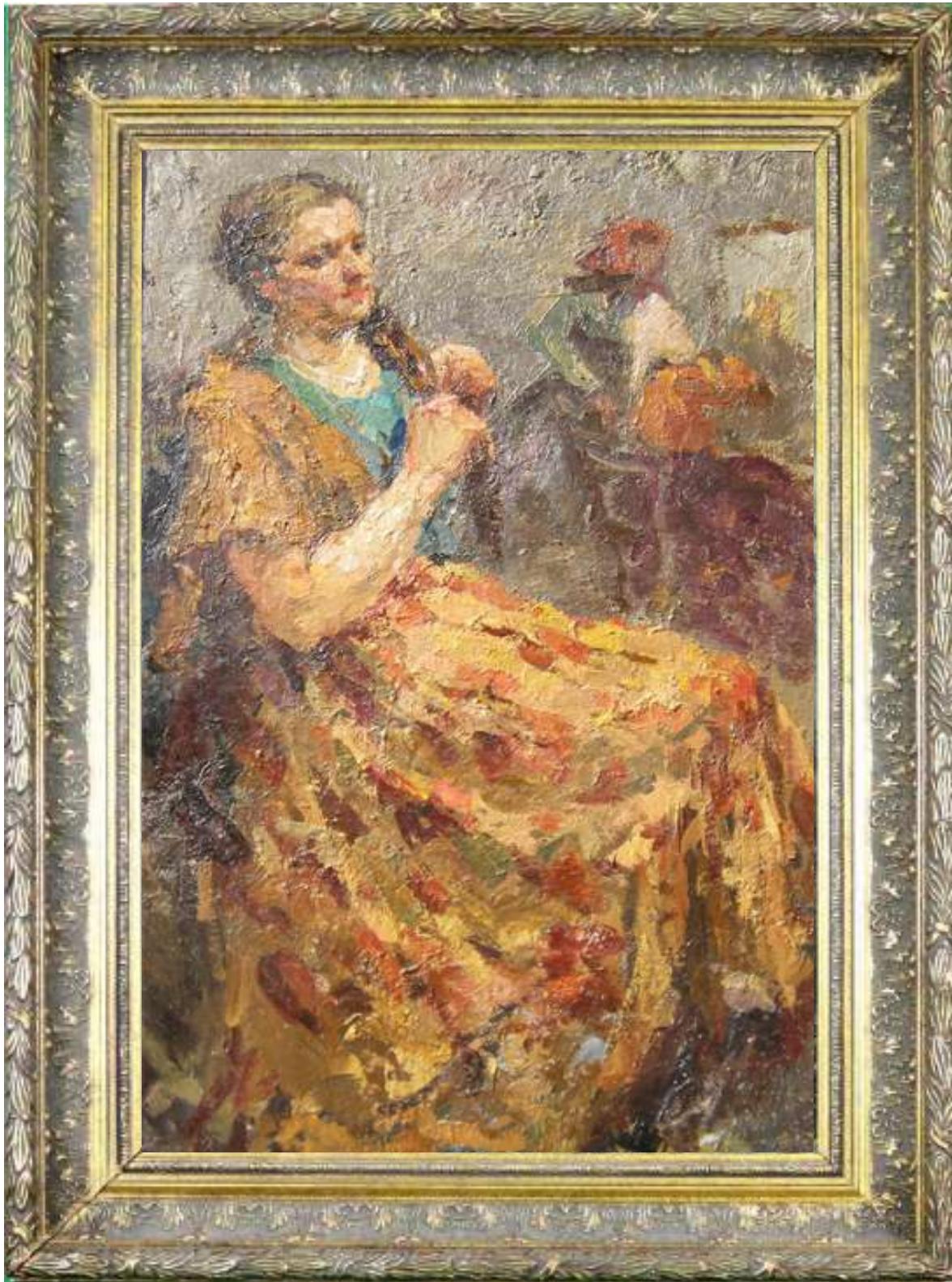
Mikhail Kamanin  
*On The Volga Shore*, 1953  
O/C, 16" x 21"



Nikolai Matasov  
*Student girl*, 1969  
O/B, 18.5" x 26.5"



Andrey Zhirnov  
*Milkmaids in the Field*, 1961  
O/B, 7" x 18.5"



Valentina Globina  
*Thoughts About The Past*, 1954  
O/C, 26" x 17.25"

Ilya Kats  
*Northern Port*, 1963  
O/C, 15.5" x 22.5"



Ivan Kirillov  
*Young Pioneer*, 1959  
O/B, 24.75" x 20"



Nikolai Solovov  
*Near Hotel "Russia"*, 1965  
O/C, 14" x 20.75"



Ekaterina Syromiatnikova  
*Lvov*, 1950  
O/C, 19.75" x 23.75"





Aleksey Motorin  
*Thawing in the sun*, 1961  
O/B, 14" x 20"



Vitali Sidorov  
*Portrait of an Artist Korovin*, 1973  
O/C, 28" x 35"



Yuriy Frolov  
*Roosters*, 1949  
O/B, 4.5" x 13.5"



Andrey Zhirnov  
*Man Woman and Child*, 1954  
Conte, 30" x 21.5"



Aleksey Motorin  
*By the Fire*, 1951  
O/B, 13.5" x 19.5"



Aleksey Motorin  
*Woman's Portrait*, 1957  
O/B. 14.25" x 19.25"



Aleksey Motorin  
*Outskirts*, 1965  
O/B, 12.25" x 9.25"



Lyudmila Skubko-Karpas  
*Luba*, 1969  
O/C, 23" x 31"



Vitali Sidorov  
*Future Sailors*, 1955  
O/C, 40" x 28.5"



Aleksandr Egidis  
*Female Portrait*, 1970  
O/C, 46" x 37"



Aleksey Motorin  
*In the Village*, 1952  
O/B, 14.25" x 21.5"



Vladimir Telnov  
*The Union Of Water And Land*, 1958  
O/C, 22.5" x 17"



Aleksey Motorin  
*On the Construction Site*, 1953  
O/B, 14.25" x 19.5"



Eugeny Usachev  
*Woman in Red*, 1960  
O/C, 16.5" x 12.5"

Aleksey Motorin  
*On the break*, 1957  
O/B, 20.25" x 28.25"



Nina Sergeeva  
*Girls*, 1968  
O/B, 34" x 40"

Gennadiy Troshkin  
*At The Bus Station*, 1960  
O/B, 11.5" x 14.5"



Gennadiy Troshkin  
*Cityscape*, 1959  
O/B, 11.75" x 16"

Aleksey Motorin  
*Small Village*, 1958  
O/C, 13" x 10"



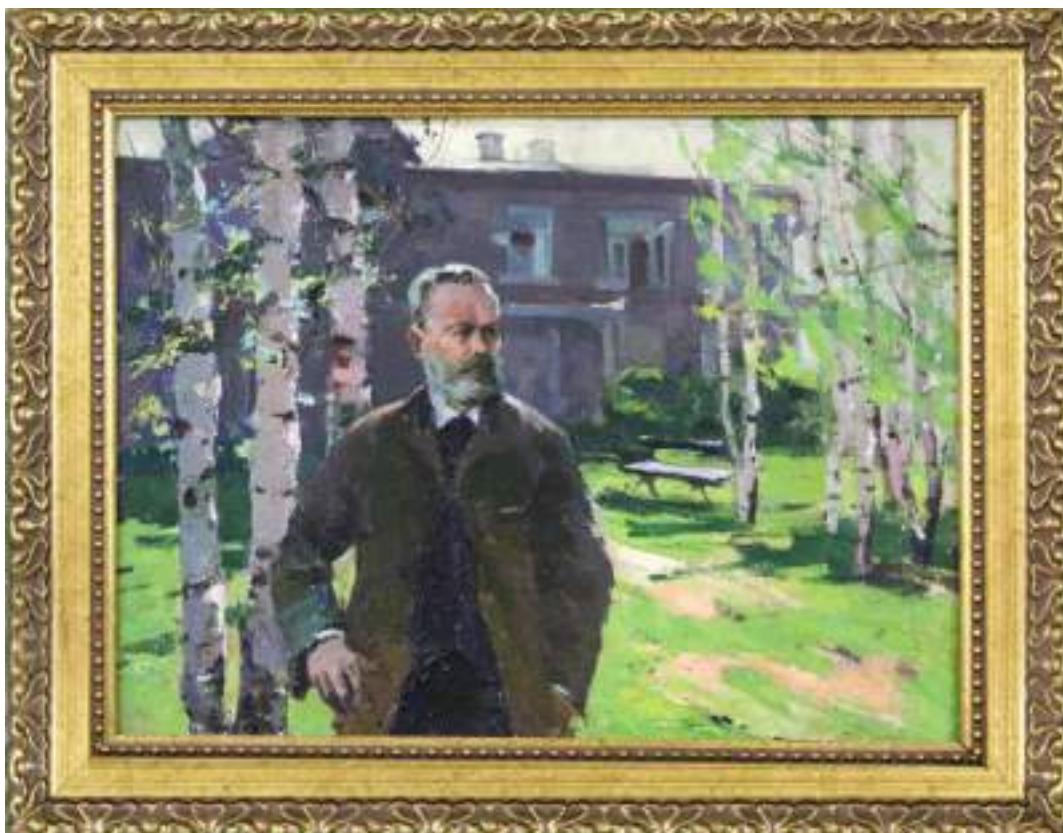
Aleksandr Petukhov  
*Carpenter*, 1960  
O/C, 23.5" x 17.5"

Nina Sergeeva  
*Crimean Landscape*, 1967  
O/B, 33.5" x 42"



Nikolai Silaev  
*On the 7th street*, 1960  
O/B, 9.5" x 12.5"

Pyotr Tsvilikov  
"Gzhelka-River", 1959  
O/B, 19" x 13.5"



Aleksei Rudnev  
*Composer Pyotr Tchaikovsky*, 1965  
O/C, 17" x 23"



Nikolai Nazarenko  
*In The Afternoon*, 1967  
O/B, 20.5" x 30"



Ivan Utenkov  
*Old Woman*, 1956  
O/C, 20" x 42"

Kamil Safargaleev  
*Portrait of a Young Girl*, 1965  
O/B, 16.5" x 14"



Eleonora Zharenova  
*Two Boys*, 1952  
O/B, 8.5" x 14"



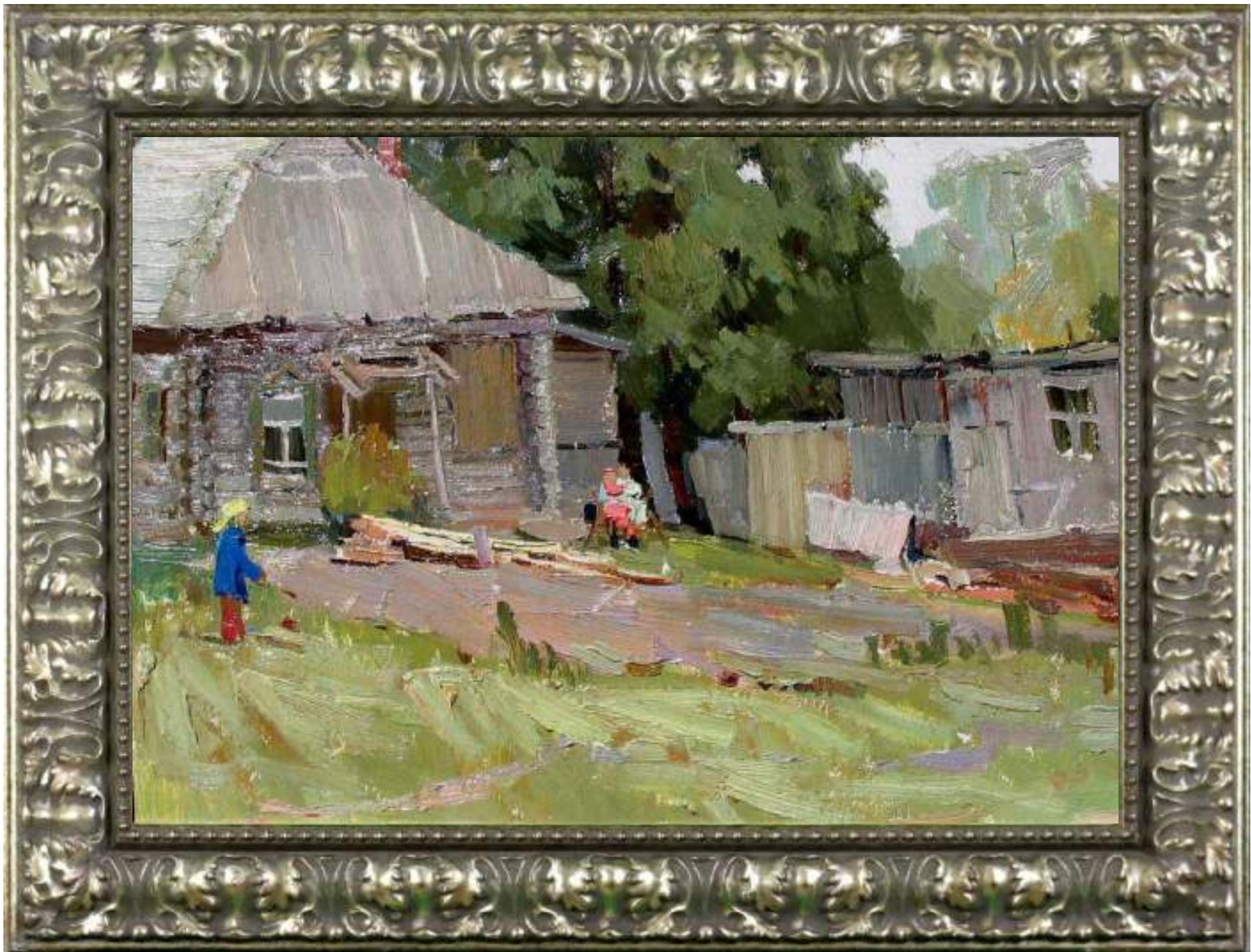
Ardalion Kusmin  
*Girl On The Beach*, 1960  
O/B, 12" x 17"



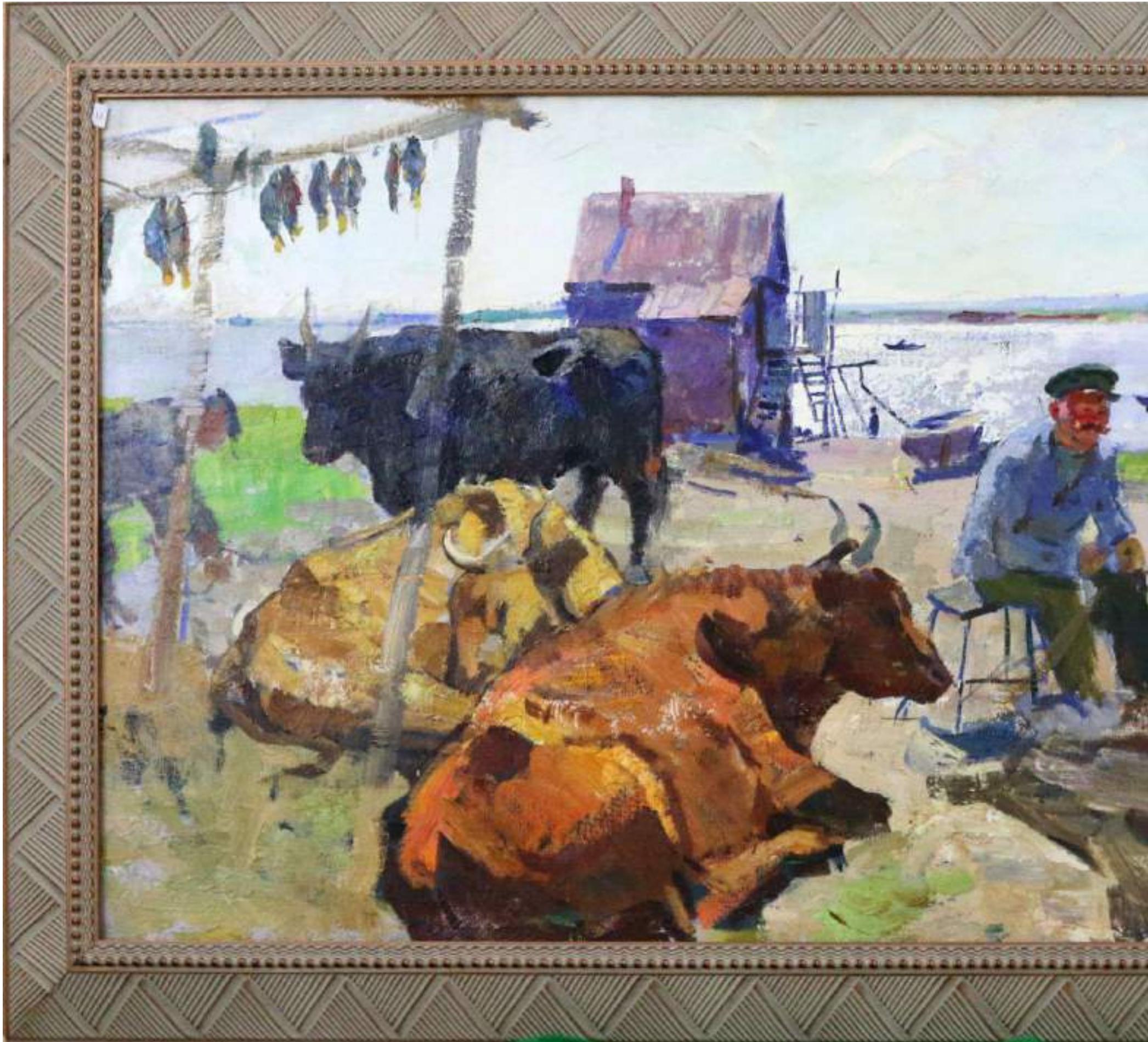
Lyudmila Skubko-Karpas  
*Larissa*, 1965  
O/C, 23.25" x 15"



Veniamin Kudryashov  
*1941, 1965*  
O/C, 64" x 52"



Mikhail Bratchenko  
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Boris Sporykhin  
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