

## “20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY RUSSIAN ART”

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the world saw a dramatic cultural change causing it to be one of the most transformative periods in history. Global wars, the uprising of industrialization, and the constant pressure to be better than ever before initiated a lot of these changes.

In Russia during the 20<sup>th</sup> century the lifestyles of the population were heavily influenced by the government and the development of the Soviet Union. These political perspectives tried to limit the freethinking nature of civilization thus causing a desire by artists to break free from what they were being told to create and move towards more emotional and thought provoking works that depicted the true state of the country. Three of these such artists were Vladimir Petrov, Yuri Alexandrovich Medvedev, and Alexander Alexandrovsky. Though these artist were each born over ten years apart, the influence of Soviet history is still a stylistic influence on each.

Vladimir Petrov was born in 1920 in Astrakhan, Soviet Russia. Prior to Petrov's birth, 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian art had a heavy focus on portraiture and mythology. Realistic detail within those paintings showed that an artist was advanced at his craft. When Petrov was 14 he began attending the Astrakhan art school where he learned the technical skills in both painting and drawing from several great artists of the day. He eventually graduated and moved to Enotaevsk to become an art teacher. However, in 1939 Petrov became a soldier in the Red Army fighting against fascist Germany. This presented him with the chance to tour various nations. Ultimately Petrov was wounded in battle and while healing decided to attend the Latvian Academy of Fine Arts in Riga where he received his diploma. His time serving in the army gave Petrov the inspiration for many of his works.

Though Petrov's paintings do not depict the fighting he took part in, his works exhibit the settings through which he traveled. The predominant subject matter in his works showcase the local scenery of rolling hills, open plains, buildings set along the coast, small towns, and monuments. Vladimir Petrov's work does have a focus on detail like the artist's before him, yet the way he painted was much more expressionistic. For example, the way people are portrayed in his artworks is more of a recognition that people were present and less about who they were. In addition, the application of his paints create dimension by emphasizing lighting and molding the environment. This strayed away from the photographic style of painting in the past and instead captures emotions with each intentional strokes of the paint. The perspective of Petrov's works causes them to feel almost posed because the viewer is set further away from the action, as depicted by the amount of skyline visible in each work. This causes an emotional trigger of feelings of longing or an admiration, without the ability to participate. However, the proportion of sky shown in the works could correspond to a feeling of optimism because the sky has the inventive ability to transform with changing weather, whereas the objects on the ground are less free to alter where they are going. This could be an influence of the oppressive nature of the communist society during war times. The stories within each of Petrov's artworks might not be theatrical like the mythological Russian art of the past, but rather his works depict the actual lives and setting of the Soviet people at that time.



Yuri Alexandrovich Medvedev had a similar desire to take a new approach with his artwork compared to the artworks of the past. Medvedev was born in Ufa in 1939. He graduated from architecture school in 1962 and then worked as an architect for many years. His job, like Petrov's military career, allowed him to travel and see new parts of the world that he had not been previously exposed to, which heavily inspired his drawing abilities. At this time the Second World War had ended, but the devastation on the economy had taken a toll on the country. In order to rebuild Soviet influence in the world, Soviet minds initiated projects such as launching Sputnik into orbit in 1957 and a few years later sending the first human into space. The idea that someone could travel outside of this world and into an unknown land inspired many artists like Medvedev to test their own limits and create more abstract artworks.

Though Yuri Medvedev was trained as an architect, his work heavily reflects the influences of his peers and focuses more on humanity and nature rather than structural forms. In the mid-1960s, Medvedev had become a member of the USSR Architects Union and participated in multiple art shows and painters exhibitions. These settings introduced Medvedev to many new artists who inspired him to test his own limits with his style of painting. In addition, Medvedev's teachers exposed him to some of the great 20<sup>th</sup> century artists in Europe, like Picasso, whose cubist movement clearly influenced some of Medvedev's style. Picasso's cubist paintings and Medvedev's paintings use multiple angles to try and give the viewer more information about the subject. Both artists also utilize distinct lines creating shapes filled in with vibrant colors to form their bold imagery that breaks away from the super realism of the past. Despite these descriptive angles, only some information is given to the viewer in the details of the artwork. This stylistic choice gives the audience the impression that the artist captured the subjects in the middle of the action, so the viewer has to try and interpret the rest of the story surrounding the uncertain scene. Also similar to Picasso, Medvedev's work varies in its intensity- some works depict normal Soviet life while others are more extravagant, unusual events. Each of his works however, reflect the changing lives of Soviet citizens and, like Vladimir Petrov's works, test the limits of previous generations of Russian artwork.

Alexander Alexandrovsky's work does not challenge Russian art of the past, but rather rejuvenates the styles of previous Russian artists like Petrov and Medvedev. Born in 1951 in Pushkin, a suburb of Leningrad, Alexandrovsky took private art lessons from a teacher who had been taught by another renowned Soviet artist, Victor Oreshnikov. He learned a great deal of technical skill from his instructor and was accepted into the St. Petersburg Academy of Art where he graduated in 1989, completing a thesis

project on the Russian Civil War. Since Alexandrovsky's growth into the art community comes towards the fall of the Soviet Union, many of his works allude back to its dominance while also reflecting the change in society and the newer freedoms of its people.

Though his works mainly depict scenery, Alexandrovsky's art also contains a narrative aspect, similar to Medvedev's paintings. His works often have a division between the world directly in front of the viewer and the world shown off in the distance, usually depicted by some type of path going from an outskirts community heading in the direction of some taller structure. This focus point is sometimes a Russian Orthodox Church, possibly putting emphasis on the early Soviet Union's desire to alienate citizens from faith in order to emphasize leaders like Stalin as being the ultimate ruler. Unlike Medvedev's works, the layout of Alexandrovsky's work usually plays with perspective and the lines within the scenery, drawing the viewers' eyes all throughout the heavily detailed artwork. Alexandrovsky's work also looks into the future showing peaceful scenes of these areas and framing the work to cause the viewer to feel as though they were an active part of the scene, walking through were Alexandrovsky walked. Often showing some open air setting, his work builds on

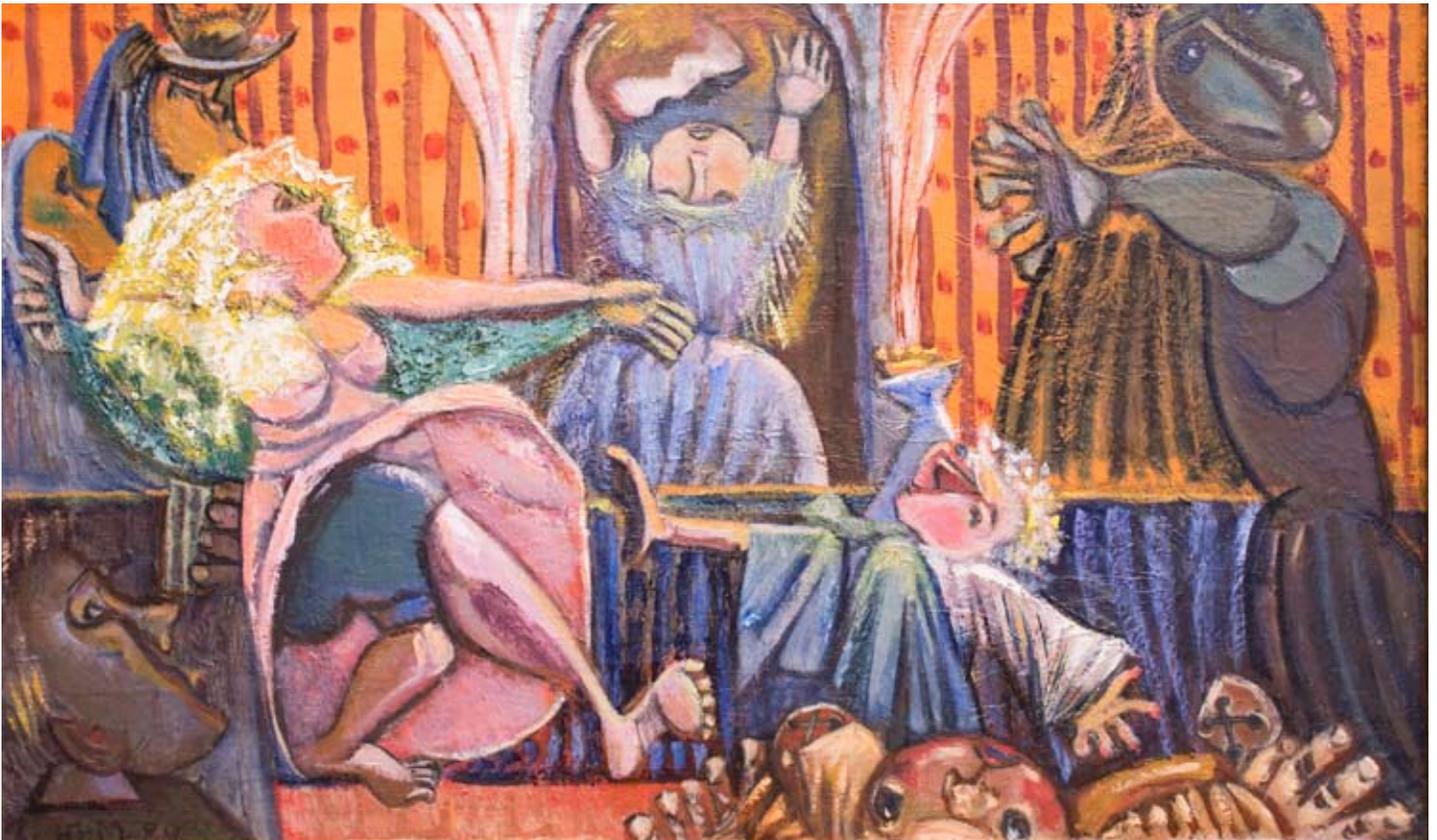
Petrov's idea of possibilities in negative space. Alexandrovsky's works show the transformation from a limited Soviet society to a more lively Russian society, going from the toned down colors in Petrov's works to the more vivid expressionistic paints. Overall, Alexandrovsky's works incorporate the styles of past Russian artists to showcase the importance of knowing one's history to understand the possibilities of the future.

Vladimir Petrov, Yuri Alexandrovich Medvedev, and Alexander Alexandrovsky all exemplify the extent to which society can influence artistic style. The transition of Russia and the world during the times of these artist's creations created the opportunity to depict society in a very expressive way when in the past everything had been so strictly defined. In recording the world around them, these artists captured the mind frame and the inner desires of those living in Russia during the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## ***NOW SHOWING***

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**"The Dancers" - Oil on Canvas, 27 x 43 inches - Yuri Medvedev**

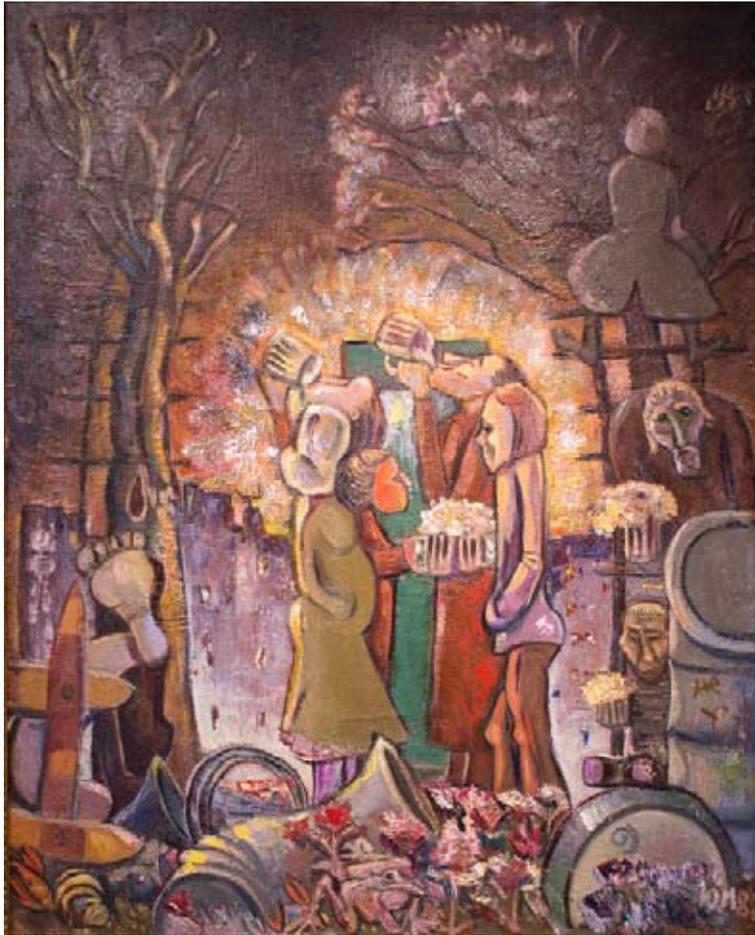




**“Street Scene” - Oil on Canvas, 32 x 43 inches - Yuri Medvedev**

**“The River” - Oil on Canvas, 26 x 35 inches - Yuri Medvedev**





**“The Beer Drinkers” - Oil on Canvas, 43 x 35 inches - Yuri Medvedev**

**“Tea Party” - Oil on Canvas, 36 x 48 inches - Yuri Medvedev**





**“River Scene” - Oil on Canvas, 48 x 36 inches - Yuri Medvedev**

**“Party” - Oil on Canvas, 36 x 48 inches - Yuri Medvedev**





**“Flight 2” - Oil on Canvas, 36 x 44 inches - Vladimir Petrov**

**“Village Market” - Oil on Canvas, 32 x 43 inches - Vladimir Petrov**





**“Flight” - Oil on Canvas, 32 x 32 inches - Vladimir Petrov**

**“Big Fish” - Oil on Canvas, 44 x 53 inches - Vladimir Petrov**





**“Blacksmith Shop-Where the Metal is Made” - Oil on Canvas, 30 x36 inches - Vladimir Petrov**

**“Village Scene” - Oil on Canvas, 36 x 44 inches - Vladimir Petrov**





**“First Communion” - Oil on Canvas, 23 x 26 inches - Vladimir Petrov**

**“Village Wedding” - Oil on Canvas, 36 x 44 inches - Vladimir Petrov**





**"Bridge" - Oil on Canvas, 17 x 18 inches - Alexander Alexandrovsky**

**"Autumn on Fontanka" - Oil on Canvas, 26 x 37 inches - Alexander Alexandrovsky**





**“In Civil War” Thesis Painting - Oil on Canvas, 43 x 54 inches - Alexander Alexandrovsky**

**“Tihuin” - Oil on Canvas, 42 x 24 inches - Alexander Alexandrovsky**





**"Kargopol Soviet Street" - Oil on Canvas, 34x18 inches - Alexander Alexandrovsky**

**"Kargopol Winter" - Oil on Canvas, 17 x 18 inches - Alexander Alexandrovsky**





**“Winter Scene” - Oil on Canvas, 19 x 44 inches - Alexander Alexandrovsky**

**“Sharing a Moment” - Charcoal on Paper, 9 x 12 inches - Yuroz**





**"Connected Souls" - Painted Serigraph,  
23.5 x 29.5 inches - Yuroz**



**"Tender Embrace" - Painted Serigraph,  
23.5 x 29.5 inches - Yuroz**

**“The Cello” - Serigraph,  
32x48 inches - Yuroz**



**“In the Garden” - Clay board, 28 x 34 inches - Yuroz**

