

# Nature's soul and voice revealed

Landscape painter Valery Shkarubo showcases his best pieces in Grodno, created over 25 years

By Viktor Korbut

An exhibition of Valery Shkarubo's landscapes, depicting Belarusian nature, is on show at Grodno's New Castle. It features 26 pictures by one of the best modern artists. However, Valery modestly denies his status, saying, "I just have some successful works." In fact, Mr. Shkarubo's style is unique, revealing the human psyche, while capturing images with a photographic approach. It seems that his pictures give us a 'cardiogram' of amazing nature, in all its glory and in delicate detail.

It's perhaps no wonder that, for many years, Valery has been exhibiting his pictures in Belarus, Europe, Asia and America. Galleries and private collections in New York, Moscow, Beijing, Berlin, Paris, Vienna, Brussels and elsewhere house his drawings.

He chooses not to draw foreign landscapes, and admits this is probably because of his homesickness when away from Belarus. "I'm always keen to return home as quickly as possible. In Italy, I tried to draw landscapes but failed. The country was full of bright colours, which looked as if they were leaping onto the canvas themselves; I painted many sketches but transformed none of them into paintings. Those landscapes were not my own;

they were Italian!"

He views late autumn as his favourite season. Valery always manages to depict this autumn-winter time when the first snow falls (as characteristic of Belarus) in a fairy tale manner.

Valery has a deep understanding of nature. His pictures are energetic and command attention — from professionals and laymen. Art critics have nothing but praise for him, as one online review testifies: "I'm sitting in the office. People are scurrying, talking, discussing projects, while telephones are ringing, faxes are buzzing, monitors are radiant and key buttons are cluttering. Work is in full swing and there is no time to stop and think of the eternal. However, it's sometimes necessary to concentrate and simply breathe deeply. At such times, I turn my head and... plunge into a landscape. The picture might seem ordinary, depicting only nature (without people): grass bent in the wind and trees along the road... the sky grey, covered with rain clouds due to unburden themselves. I survey the picture and wait for the rain, like a child."



Valery Shkarubo reveals hidden beauty of ordinary sights

Meanwhile, it sometimes takes a master a whole year to wait for the birth of a single picture. Valery tells us, "At least a year passes between my drawing a sketch of a landscape and painting a picture. Sketches await me in the workshop until the right moment arises and an old sketch 'asks' for attention. I then take it and begin drawing different outlines. These differ greatly, with winter perhaps substituted by autumn. Later, I compile my future picture from these small pieces — like a puzzle. My landscape is invented, being a collection of pieces. I draw my own sky, mood, trees and state. A picture is a 'compound sentence'. The things I depict do not actually exist in reality. I deceive audiences. However, I must lie in a convincing manner, so that the audience believes that these very clouds were moving above the trees, reflected in this water."

We can't but believe this artist! It might seem that each scene is simple: a field covered with first snow, a road or bushes. Nevertheless, the artist unveils beauty which is rarely recognised, lifting the curtain to show us seemingly insignificant objects, which we might think lack a soul. Suddenly, the smallest elements gain a voice, whispering their secrets to us within a true masterpiece.

## Photography is like wine, with the passing of time most often of major importance

Photographer Oleg Gritskovich climbs mountains for desired shot

By Maria Brutsevich

The winner of *National Geographic's Most Amazing Moments* contest has inherited his passion from his father. In his childhood, they would spend evenings developing black-and-white film together, printing photos. On seeing the boy's interest in photography, Oleg's father bought him a 'Smena' camera, when he was just 9 years old. Since then, Oleg, now 38, has been establishing himself as a photographer. "The camera allows me to feel the moment more deeply," he admits. "Each time I click the shutter, I feel closer to this moment. Before making a shot, I try to see it as it would appear on paper."

Oleg read about *National Geographic's Most Amazing Moments* contest from a Belarusian photo website, one day before its deadline. He sent in several photos online and, from over 2,000 entries, the jury chose his *Overflow of Holy Waters*. It seems impossible to define the plot of the shot at first sight, although we are left with the

impression that computer graphics have been used. In reality, it is the result of the photographer's sharp eye. He finds the perfect moment for the shot, showing the top of a Hindu temple barely above



Winning shot for National Geographic's contest

the waterline during a flood. It was taken from a hotel balcony in Indian Varanasi. "I wanted it to inspire wonder in those who saw it, since it's not immediately apparent what's being depicted," Oleg smiles. "I think this may be one of the reasons why the jury chose my work."

As a rule, Oleg tends to plan each shot, perhaps waking early, before dawn,

to catch the right light or weather conditions. If the sun disappears or rain begins, it can spoil everything. He once spent several days waiting for a particular shot of an ancient temple com-

plex in Cambodia. Oleg believes that sunrise and sunset are the best times for taking photos. Accordingly, he always takes his camera when going for an evening or morning run. Most of his photos have been taken in Asia, where Oleg often travels. "People who think in the Eastern way are less affected by globalisation," he muses. "Moreover, Eastern coun-

tries boast a mild, tropical climate, with high mountains and wild beaches. In addition, some of Asia's ethnic communities have remained as they were 500 years ago, with little changing in their lifestyle or architecture."

He tries to travel 'off the beaten track', since he finds it more interesting to climb an unknown 5,000m mountain peak than to walk well-trodden routes. He has never been to the Egyptian pyramids or Everest but has climbed Elbrus alone, discovering the wild Tibetan mountains, walking where others have not. According to Oleg, it's impossible to conquer a mountain's peak, since nature is always stronger than man. Each summit can only be stood upon momentarily, before the mountain reclaims its supremacy and drives the climber back to safety. However, the Asian mountains seem well-disposed towards the Belarusian photographer, having allowed him to enjoy their beauty. Oleg's shots of these amazing, almost unexplored, places take your breath away.

## Countrymen's names become known

By Irina Sovrasova

**Belarusians Abroad book presented at National Library**

The book primarily focuses on those of our countrymen who have made their name abroad: poets, artists, mathematicians, physicists, presidents, researchers and diplomats. Among them is Minsk born Louis Mayer, who became one of the most successful US film producers, founding MetroGoldwyn-Mayer and the globally known 'Oscar' awards.

The 500 page book — released by the Petrus Brovka Belarusian Encyclopaedia Publishing House — is il-

lustrated with maps showing the migration of Belarusians and photos of documents. *Belarusians Abroad* is published in Russian and Belarusian and took almost two years to research and write. "The complexity of this book is rooted in its placement of the whole unique history of the Belarusian nation in a single edition," says candidate of historical sciences Natalia Golubeva, co-author and a member of the Writers' Union of Belarus. The book covers those countries where most of our countrymen now reside and a film project — *Land of Geniuses* — is being realised, also devoted to famous Belarusians.

## Poets and prose writers accompanied by colleagues

**Minsk's Literaturny Svet Publishing House releases anthology of Polotskaya Vety Belarusian Literary Union**

The book contains photos of the 104 authors, alongside their biographies, details of their creative activities and a bibliography. Poets and prose writers, playwrights and literary critics, translators and literary men, many of whom are laureates of international

literary contests and festivals, are included.

The anthology gives a detailed chronological description of the 16 years of the Literary Union and includes a list of members of this artistic association. The anthology will go on display in the 12 Belarusian cities which have branches of the Polotskaya Vety Belarusian Literary Union, set up in 1994 and uniting 119 literary men.