

VICTOR ALIMPIEV

RADIANT

04/03/2015 - 11/04/2015

Opening: 3 March, 19.00

The Regina gallery is happy to present RADIANT, the personal show of Victor Alimpiev.

The evolution of so called optical media (photography, TV, video, internet) allows us to topple contemporary perception of information into the past and to consider thinking of painting as a transmitting device. Picture already happened to be a scene where mythological themes were worked out, as well as a surface with planted prints of an artist's gestures. Now a picture is a screen for projections created by both an author and viewers, an entity being quite open to any routes of interpretation and at the same time blocked due to the fact of its finality; it is a newly found – in the next move from the smooth canvas without any marks – virginity of an image formed forever (supposedly), an image which cannot be corrected, or redone, by anybody except its creator. The idea of likening a picture to a screen has its parity in the legendary beginnings of painting: in a story by Pliny the Younger the Corinth maid draws out the profile of her sleeping lover. Here the shadow is a projection of the author desire induced just by a fleeting temptation which lives solely under the conditions of fine weather, sunlight and the lover's pose. The outline invites a viewer to house his/her fantasies in a strictly framed place, and among those fantasies the central is the wish of total identification with the artist who has staked out the claim for the original temptation. What is left in the picture when all the projections are switched off, or at least their moving is hindered? The screen is left, or as Victor Alimpiev refers to his works, "*totally empty piece*". Of course, emptiness per se is technically impossible, no canvas can be erased, torn or burnt in such a way that transfers it out of the limits of the visible (and accordingly out of perception limits). But it is possible to make a screen with such characteristics that allow to show a large number of movies – either about a canvas being just a board with colorful smudges, or about erotic, political and ant other associations suggested by layers of color and graphic lines. Provided that the screen is made to "show" projections not one by one but simultaneously, in one and the same shaft. It is important that the shaft is not encumbered with historical anchors that tie down imagery to time and place. Alimpiev manages to create such a picture that can be seen and at the same time it allows to look at the projection beam sidewise.

If in his previous painting series Alimpiev relied on the physical presence of canvas and the thematic sequence of pieces as the signs of continuing action (for example in the series "Battle Afar"), in the new series the artist experiments consistently with the measures of paintings and tries a new technique – drawing in canvas through carbon paper. The face of the British opera singer Kathleen Ferrier, a bowing girl, a back of the head, the fascist Brownshirts' logo, plumes of smoke – all these appear before our eyes in recognizable forms but in conglomerations which disperse immediately in "starry" pictures-doppelgangers, where silhouettes are given only allusively. The presence of those characters and themes is not explained directly. For Alimpiev the contralto of Kathleen Ferrier, for example, is an important external referent ("*I paint parallel to the dimension where her voice sounds*"). Besides Ferrier is "pretty as a picture" and steadfast like many other opera singers of the first half of the XX century: her body as a whole is an instrument. With Alimpiev the Ferrier's body is instrumental

too, though we may not know it perceiving only its motionlessness. The logo “SS” stands for synchronized bolts of lightning which is naturally impossible. For the artist those bolts are connected to the notion of *“unfathomable evil”*, impending like a weight at the outskirts of the artistic text. Both in his imagery and in omissions and lacunas Alimpiev follows the path trodden by late Monet who discovered the first screen of modern painting, that is a pond’s surface. Alimpiev’s pictures resemble the streams of water with grass-blades like lines folding up in something solemn and alluring. With Monet a water surface being inseparable in our understanding from the illusion of depth is given as an active plane unlimited either by scenario or by frame. So, depth comes as a side effect of seeing the picture, like a sensation without evidence which is similar to evil brought up to mind by the SS logo. To see a water-lily – an object which the title of the picture and a lemon with beige spot on the canvas refer to – you must scramble through hundreds of conventions and approximations. That demands a habit of belief from a viewer – a capacity strongly connected to the process of reading an artistic text. In fact belief is the light of a projection, the fluctuation of particles between the transmitter and the screen.

Alimpiev says he would like to *“baptize people”* reminding us of a certain function of European painting which is to be a medium of benedictory imagery. This kind of faith is ambiguous and uncanonical, it exists somewhere between inspiration and a headache (the same can be said about temptation). In *“The Logic of Sensation”* by Gilles Deleuze, a book that is very important for Alimpiev, the French philosopher infers firstly the thematic variety of European painting from the assumption *“if God exists, then everything is permitted”* and later he adds: *“grains of quiet atheism inherent to Christianity germinate in painting; a painter may be quite indifferent to a religious scene that he is summoned to depict”*. Indeed, a personal attitude to the figures and symbols can be rarely abstracted from skill and talent. More to it, indifference to the subject equals to the esthetic requirement to capture ritual images in order to manipulate them at one’s own will. Correspondingly, for Alimpiev the titles of paintings *“are not wildly important – either “stars”, or “a pretty face with a strange expression” can be left unnamed and go on performing their function, an esthetic one in this case”*. It is rather hard to transmit indifference or to make it one of the things that happen to a viewer standing in front of a painting. Knowing nothing about Christ, it is easy to believe in Him looking at *“The Ascent to Calvary”* by Tintoretto. Knowing nothing about Ferrier, it is easy to get lost in her discography after having seen the paintings by Alimpiev. However, the artist manages to keep a balance between temptation seen as an indication to the desirable sensations of the real world and the demonstration of a picture-screen in all the complexity of its technical details.

Valentin Dyakonov

Victor Alimpiev was born in Moscow in 1973. He graduated from the Art School of Memory of 1905, and the New Art Strategies at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Moscow. Today Victor Alimpiev is one of the most interesting and distinguished figures in contemporary Russian art. His works are included in the collections of such important Russian and Western museums and foundations as the National Center for Contemporary Arts, the Moscow Museum of Modern Art, Tate Modern, Centre Pompidou, MuHKA, MART-Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Rovereto, Cultural Foundation EKATERINA, Contemporary City Foundation, the Nicola Trussardi Foundation, Sandretto Re Rebaudengo Foundation. He participated in the 2nd and 5th Moscow Biennale, the 4th Berlin Biennale and the Venice Biennale in 2003 and 2013.

For more information call (495)2281330 or Ekaterina Chuvashova 8(926)6602553.