

World Federation of Miniaturist's 5th World exhibition of miniatures in Moscow – September 2012

Most Friends will now know about this exhibition, which ARSA and the newly formed Russian Miniature Art Society hosted in Russia this year.

The WFM is an umbrella organisation which bonds [currently] nine miniature art societies in Australia, USA, UK and South Africa. Host societies have been taking it in turns to put on international exhibitions approximately every four years. The first was held in London in 1995 as part of the RMS centenary celebrations. The next, in 2000, was held in Hobart, Tasmania. The third exhibition was mounted in Washington DC, at the Smithsonian in 2004, and the 4th once again in Tasmania in 2008.

Ludmilla Fishchuk and Zhenya Grachev came to Tasmania in 2008 and Ludmilla immediately felt that this was something she would like to do, and her offer was gratefully accepted by the WFM council in that year.

No-one could have anticipated the trials and challenges that would occur. Firstly it was necessary for



ARSA to form a miniature art society so as to qualify to host the exhibition. That took some doing in terms of paperwork, legal issues and general beurocracy. Then of course as we all know, came the tragedy of Vladimir's illness and eventual death, so close to the date of the exhibition.

Ludmilla could have cancelled and we would all have understood, but she bravely decided to carry on and make the exhibition and associated trips to Russia a tribute in memory of her husband.

Further problems arose when the boxes of artwork, which had been sent from their host countries to Judith Young, got stuck in a depot in London for five months. Then Russian customs demanded that she translate the artist name and title of each of the 523 works into Russian before they would release the consignment, which arrived in August, , leaving Ludmilla about three weeks to hang the exhibition.

She succeeded magnificently, and the exhibition opened on Wednesday 12th September with a magnificent reception, including wine, Russian canapés, a harp and flute ensemble, and a piano recital. The exhibition looked splendid and there was a parallel exhibition of Russian arts and crafts by some of Russia's best artists, including the lacquer boxes, Zhostovo ware, Khokhlomo ware, batik, coloured etchings, oils, embroidery and more.

The list of visitors to the exhibition was impressive and included representatives from the Russian Ministry of Culture, the Head of the Fund of Culture of the Russian Federation, and most of the leading specialists in the field of art, including academics and professors of art. There were delegations from Germany and Italy, and a minister from South Africa.

There was also considerable media interest. A short film was made of the exhibition which is to be broadcast as part of an educational and cultural programme in Russia, and a representative from the Ministry of Culture is writing an article for a magazine dedicated to the decorative arts. A radio programme about the exhibition has also been broadcast. In spite of many enquiries no sales were made, and this was primarily because the cost of the art was too high for the Russian visitors. However this exhibition has magnificently fulfilled the main aim of the WFM, which is to expand "global participation in, understanding of, and support for miniature art".

Twenty-two delegates came for the exhibition and WFM conference, from Australia, USA, South Africa and the UK. We were wonderfully entertained, both in Moscow and on the various trips we undertook. These included a 2 day trip to St. Petersburg for some, a trip to Kholui and Palekh for others, and a trip to Fedoskino for a select few on the last day of their trip.

Most of us had not been to Russia before and most of those who had been had not seen the real Russia which ARSA can show you. For me it was great fun to introduce my painting friends to the Russia I have come to love so much.



Judith and I visited the Mityashins and I am pleased to report that both Piotr and Olga seem in very good health and spirits. I handed over US\$1000 collected by Joanna for the church restoration.

We passed the new Art School, which does not seem to have progressed much in the last two years. Ludmilla is waiting for an update on that.

Our days were crammed with different events, sight-seeing, theatrical events [some very surprising indeed], and finally a

cruise down the Moscow river with all the Russian, US, UK Australian and South African artists together eating a splendid buffet dinner.

This short visit to Russia [between 6 and 10 days for different groups] will be unforgettable to the people who took part. It has introduced western contemporary miniature art to many Russians who had not seen it before. It has also introduced Russia at its best to an international group of artists, whom I hope will want to return. All in the WFM want to express our thanks and admiration to Ludmilla for all she has achieved.

Caroline Hayes
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