

Friends of Nukus Museum



Quarterly Newsletter No. 3

December 30, 2007

1. New Year's greetings from Washington, D.C. (David Pearce), Istanbul (Kees Kramer), and Nukus (Marinika Babanazarova and her colleagues). We hope that 2008 will be a peaceful and productive one for all Friends of Nukus Museum, for the FoNM Foundation, and, especially, for the Museum itself.

A. FoNM Foundation News

2. **Governance.** First, as some Friends may already know, Kees Kramer, after over four years based in Istanbul, will relocate to The Netherlands effective January 1, 2008. Second, Rada Lankina, a founding member from Tashkent living since mid-2002 in Washington, D.C., has kindly agreed to join the Board as the Foundation's membership secretary. Third, pending recruitment of a successor to Thymen Kouwenaar now in Moscow, Hélène Degen, resident in The Hague (Rijswijk), has agreed to continue acting as FoNM Treasurer temporarily.

3. Meanwhile, as noted in the first two Newsletters, we would appreciate hearing from: (a) two Friends able and willing to volunteer either as Treasurer or as the fifth Board member



provided for in the Foundation's statute; and (b) from five additional Friends able and willing to act as alternates or deputies for all five Board positions for the calendar year 2008. For practical reasons, given the location of the FoNM's bank account in The Hague, the FoNM Treasurer needs to be resident in The Netherlands, preferably in or near The Hague. However, for the remaining full and alternate Board positions, we would welcome volunteers from, ideally, seven different countries—partly to represent the FoNM's international membership but mainly to help promote the FoNM in their countries of residence.

4. **Membership and contributions.** To date, fifty (50) old and new Friends have responded to the three invitation letters issued last December/January and are thus considered FoNM members (*cf.* Attachment 1). Further, about 15 members, or 30%, have contributed US\$100 or its equivalent for the membership year July 1, 2007-June 30, 2008. To those who have already contributed, many thanks! Rada will be in touch with you very shortly and sending you your membership card. To those who have not yet contributed, we look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience! In this context, we are currently working on alternative less cumbersome and costly electronic ways (*e.g.* Pay-Pal) to transfer funds to the FoNM's bank account, especially from outside the Euro-zone.

The **Friends of Nukus Museum** bank account number is **581557352** at the ABN-AMRO Bank, Bezuidenhoutseweg 33, The Hague, 2594 AC The Netherlands. The inter-bank routing codes for international transfers are:
BIC ABNANL2A; IBAN NL17ABNA0581557352

5. For the record, 90% of each membership contribution will be made available directly to the Museum (in cash or in kind) as a token of the FoNM's support for its conservation, cultural, educational, outreach, research and other activities or projects, as agreed with the Curator/Director from time to time. Otherwise, all FoNM membership-related activities and services are being provided on a voluntary, *pro bono* basis. Over time, if we are successful in increasing the number of Friends during 2008 and, in particular, in mobilizing a modest amount of corporate and/or foundation resources for specific projects, we hope it will be possible to contemplate more ambitious activities and a higher level of FoNM support to the Museum in subsequent years.

6. **Recent Activities.** We are pleased to report important progress in the following ongoing, as

well as some new **FoNM-supported activities and projects** during the last quarter of 2007:

- **Savitsky biography.** Following receipt of a \$5,000 advance and a laptop computer last October, archival and field research required to finish the already 80% completed draft biography has resumed in earnest. Specifically, Olga Udovenko, Head of the Museum's Fine Arts Department, visited Kiev December 3-17 and plans to go to Nice early in 2008. Marinika herself will visit Moscow later in the New Year. Given the Museum's goal to publish the biography in July 2009, the 25th anniversary of Savitsky's death, it plans to have a basic Russian language manuscript ready by end-June 2008. This will allow up to one year: (a) to prepare it for publication (in a format to be determined); and (b) to translate it from Russian into (e.g.) English and French (hopefully through the FoNM's membership/network).
- **Les Survivants des Sables Rouges.** Translation from French into English of this beautiful catalogue prepared for the 1998 exhibition of paintings from the Savitsky collection in Caen, France is now well underway by an informal team of three FoNM members (Brigitte Brefort, Elizabeth Kramer and David Pearce). It is planned to have the basic translation ready by about end-January 2008, at which time the format and scope of its publication during 2008 will be determined and the needed resources assessed. In addition, translation of the catalogue into Russian is also envisaged later in 2008, for which purpose interested FoNM volunteers are invited!
- **FoNM Brochure.** The FoNM's publicity brochure originally prepared and printed in Tashkent in 2001-02 has now been updated and a copy (in PDF format) is attached to this Newsletter. Hard copies are being color printed and sent to Nukus for use by the Museum. Meanwhile, all FoNM members are encouraged to circulate copies of the attached brochure – electronically and/or hard copy – to colleagues, friends, and potential FoNM members. To this end, it is planned to have the brochure translated into French, German, Russian, and Spanish (and eventually Japanese) by mid-2008.
- **FoNM FlipAlbum CD.** Brigitte Brefort is currently finalizing a FlipAlbum CD/DVD—a comprehensive electronic album about the Museum (including selected paintings). In

addition to supplementing the brochure for Museum and FoNM information outreach activities, this CD/DVD may also be suitable for reproduction, translation and sale and, as such, be a potential source of revenue for the Museum. Further details will be available early in the New Year. Meanwhile, many thanks to Brigitte for this wonderful initiative.

- Finally, in addition to its own website (currently under construction), the FoNM has now added an entry on the Museum to **Wikipedia**, which may be accessed via: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nukus_Museum_of_Art

B. News from Nukus¹.

7. Last October 2, the Museum hosted an international symposium and related exhibition entitled **"In the Footsteps of Ancient Civilizations"**, commemorating the centennial of the birth of **Sergei Tolstov**, the founding Director of the Khorezm Archaeological and Ethnographical Expedition (of which Igor Savitsky was a member commencing 1950). For the information of members in, or planning to visit Uzbekistan during the next few months, the exhibition is will continue through March 2008.



8. As reported previously, the Museum continues to seek financing to continue the painting restoration activities undertaken with technical assistance from **Restaurateurs sans Frontières**² (RSF) during 2004-05. Unfortunately, the Museum's modest \$25,000 proposal to the Getty Foundation in 2006 was recently rejected. An especially urgent need is the replenishment of chemicals and other specialized materials used in the conservation and restoration process that are not available in Uzbekistan or Central Asia. Restoration of the Savitsky collection — ultimately a decades-long work-in-progress — obviously remains the Museum's highest priority.

9. Paintings from the Savitsky collection will feature at **two major exhibitions in Moscow next year. First**, a large exhibition of restored paintings from various collections in Russia and the CIS—including about 20 paintings from

¹ This section is based partly on information provided by Marinika Babanazarova and Nukus Museum staff

² Further details may be found on the RSF's website: www.rsfturkey.org

Nukus—will be held at the **Tretyakov Gallery** from July-August, 2008 to mark the 50th anniversary of the Institute of Restoration. **Second**, the **Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts** plans to host an exhibition of about 100 paintings from the Savitsky collection in the fall of 2008. Details of these two important events, including specific dates, will be available in the 4th Quarterly Newsletter or announced separately.

10. Meanwhile, preliminary contacts have been established with the **Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, The Netherlands**, a leading museum for modern and contemporary art in Europe, which has expressed interest in hosting an exhibition, possibly in cooperation with other galleries or museums. In this connection, a British independent film producer—Archipelago Films—has recently proposed to make a documentary about the Savitsky story and collection in conjunction with an exhibition in **London** (e.g. at the **Barbican Art Gallery** or the **Courtauld Institute**) and possibly other venues in the **United Kingdom** in 2009. Initial funding for the proposed documentary is already in place. Preliminary discussions with the film producer in London and by conference call with Nukus took place recently; and, similar discussions with the Dutch and British institutions, supported by the FoNM, are planned for January, 2008.

11. Continuation of the “**Museum on Wheels**” education outreach project—which takes works of art to schools in rural areas where children and young people have the opportunity to learn about art history and their Karakalpak cultural heritage—has been assured through 2008, thanks to a \$5,000 grant recently approved by the Swiss Development Cooperation Organization (SECO). This program, originally funded by the British Council, remains a high priority for the Museum, culturally and politically in Karakalpakstan overall; and, given its relatively low cost and high return, it remains a priority candidate for FoNM support in 2009 and beyond.

12. Finally, a four-part feature article “**The Savitsky Museum**”, including a contribution by Marinika Babanazarova, has been published in the current (November/December) issue of the new semi-annual **Steppe** (Central Asia) **Magazine** (www.steppemagazine.com).

C. Next Steps

13. Thanks to the sterling efforts of many people, this first year of the FoNM's re-incarnation has been an interesting and modestly successful one.

While the most visible result has obviously been the formal establishment of the FoNM Foundation in The Netherlands, the most important achievement has arguably been the renewed practical, moral and psychological support provided by the FoNM and its members to the Museum, which continues to operate in constrained, difficult circumstances.

14. Against this background and looking ahead to 2008, the FoNM's agenda and main priorities for the first quarter (January-March) include:

- **first**, receipt of remaining FoNM membership contributions for the first year (July 1-2007 - June 30,2008);
- **second**, recruitment of 50+ additional members and an assessment of the potential for corporate/institutional support for FoNM/Museum projects—including for the Savitsky biography;
- **third**, completion of the planned FoNM website and an inter-active FoNM blog;
- **fourth**, support for the Museum's planned exhibitions in Moscow in 2008 and for the film documentary and proposed exhibitions in The Netherlands and the United Kingdom in 2009; and
- **fifth**, initial planning for a possible week-long FoNM trip to Uzbekistan (Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva and Nukus) in the fall of 2008.

15. We look forward to receiving Friends' comments, questions, and general feedback on any or all of the above—at the electronic email addresses noted in the box below—and, in particular, any additional ideas or initiatives that Friends may have to help make the new FoNM become an internationally sustainable effort and reality. In particular, we would appreciate feedback from FoNM members interested in participating in the possible FoNM trip to Uzbekistan noted above (e.g. 7-8 days in September/October, 2008). A group of about 20-25 individuals would be the optimum size for logistical and other purposes.

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