



## CELEBRATING MARINIKA'S 25 YEARS AS DIRECTOR

1. In the last Newsletter, we commemorated the death twenty-five years ago of Igor Savitsky—artist, collector, and founder of the Museum that bears his name—seven days short of his 69<sup>th</sup> birthday. Barely five weeks later—on September 1, 1984 and six days before her 29<sup>th</sup> birthday—**Marinika Maratovna Babanazarova** succeeded Savitsky as the Museum's 2<sup>nd</sup> curator and director, as he had willed. Now, in 2009—forty three years after the Museum's official opening in 1966—we celebrate Marinika's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. At the same time, we pay tribute to all the Museum's devoted staff—especially those who knew and worked with Savitsky personally—and thank them for their dedication to his unique legacy and vision.

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2. In this 10<sup>th</sup> Quarterly Newsletter—thanks to **Anne-Laure Py**, one of this year's two FoNM interns—we describe how the Museum and its Nukus-based Friends marked these two important and related anniversaries. We also feature information about Marinika's life and work, including her personal history (*avtobiografiya*), as well as the new challenges and opportunities that have emerged for the Museum since Uzbekistan became independent in 1991—in particular, since Nukus and the rest of Karakalpakstan have become more accessible to the outside world.

3. Like Marinika herself, her *avtobiografiya* (cf. page 5 below) is concise, modest and to the point and, in line with erstwhile Soviet custom and practice, outlines key facts about her family background and professional life. It also exemplifies what has become for her a life-long commitment: (a) to protect and preserve the integrity of the Savitsky Collection in Nukus; and (b) especially since the early 1990s, to bring to the world's attention the inspirational story of Igor Savitsky as artist, collector and founder of the Museum and its extraordinary collections of *objets d'art* from ancient Khorezm, of artefacts representing the culture and folk art of the indigenous Karakalpak people, and of graphics and paintings from early 20<sup>th</sup> century Russian and Central Asian *avant-garde*.

4. **Masterpieces Reborn Exhibition.** Against this background, August 4—the 94<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Savitsky's birth and one week following the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death—saw the opening of a new exhibition comprising over 80 recently restored paintings from the Museum's archives. Epitomizing Savitsky's own cultural preservation philosophy, this show is the outcome of a four-year (2005-09) project implemented by the Museum's restoration department with financial and technical assistance from several individuals and institutions, including Mr. Kees ter Horst, the Germany Embassy in Tashkent, the Friends of Nukus Museum, and *Restaurateurs Sans Frontières* (RSF).

5. During these four years, over 100 paintings have been restored, including several masterpieces by well-known painters as well as many works by lesser-known artists. Canvasses selected for restoration had been damaged either by aging, by inadequate storage, or in some cases as a result of their poor condition at the time of their acquisition—characterized by surface shelling or cracking, punctures, cuts, frayed canvas edges, and/or the loss or fading of pigmentation. Moreover, all paintings required new frames.

6. Among these newly restored paintings are several that are of critical importance to the overall quality and range of the Savitsky Collection. For example, "**Composition**" by the Uzbek artist **Vladimir Lysenko**—painter of the iconic "**Bull**"—was restored initially by a leading Muscovite restorer, V.I. Schulgin, then, more recently, by Alvina Shpade, who worked to restore the pigment tone and color with aquarelle. Similarly, "**Still Life with Fish**" by **Efrosiniya Ermilova-Platova**, deformed and scratched before restoration, was restored by Zarema Gasanova, who stretched it, removing dust and dirt, and filled in over 10% of the surface that had lost pigmentation. In addition, the restoration of three of **Alexander Volkov's** early works, including "**Three Male Figures**"—started by Moscow experts but then aborted—was completed by Rashid Matchanov, adding to the eighteen Volkov

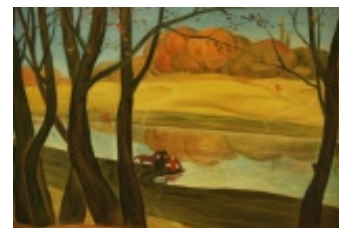
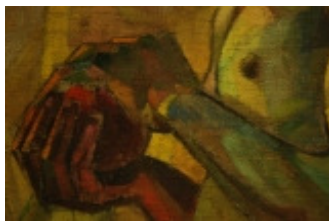
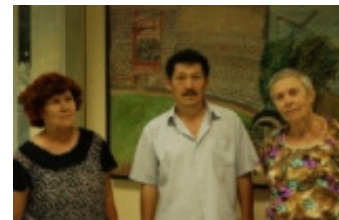
paintings already on display in the Museum's permanent collection.

7. Finally, ten paintings by **Nikolai Karakhan** were restored, including “**Women Picking Tulips**”—adding to the Museum's already extensive collection of his works (sixteen in the new building); seven by **Nikolai Tarasov**, including a self portrait and several landscapes; four by **Lyubov Popova**, including two contemplative and melancholic landscapes “**Blue Day**” and “**Yellow Path**”; and two large still-life paintings by Igor Savitsky himself—“*Still-Life with Mirror*” and “*Still-Life with Flowers*”. The exhibition also features restored works by other important artists such as **Alexander Shevchenko**, **Solomon Nikritin**, **Sergei Lupov**, **Mikhail Kurzin** and **Piotr Sokolov**.

8. Besides demonstrating the depth and range of the Savitsky Collection, the paintings included in this exhibition illustrate the evolution of restoration processes and techniques in recent years—in particular, the juxtaposition of methods and materials in use during the Soviet and immediate post-Soviet periods and the approaches and practices recommended and applied by experts in the United States and Europe. With the continued help of the FoNM as well as other international institutions and foreign experts, the Museum plans to expand and enhance further its restoration capacity and program—a daunting challenge, given the sheer size of the Museum's archive, and an undertaking that will take many, many years.

However, this is important not only to protect the Savitsky Collection for the benefit of future generations—the Museum's core mission—but also and especially to help advance knowledge and understanding of this hitherto neglected chapter of 20<sup>th</sup> century *avant-garde* history.

9. This photograph is of the Museum's three principal restorers (left to right): **Zarema Gasanova**, **Rashid Matchanov**, and **Alvina Shpade**. Alvina, whose own paintings were the subject of a much-admired solo exhibition in 2005, is the curator of the current exhibition. Immediately below are images of five restored works included in the exhibition. For the record, the exhibition will continue at least through mid-2010.



**10. August 4 Commemoration & Exhibition Opening.** The day started with a morning visit by Museum staff and friends to Igor Savitsky's grave in Nukus' Russian cemetery. Marinika laid flowers and made brief remarks eulogizing his life, mission and passion. Upon return to the Museum, all staff and guests congregated in the main entrance of the new building where Marinika officially opened the new exhibition "**Masters Reborn**". Alvina Schpade, its curator, then provided a guided tour around the exhibition.

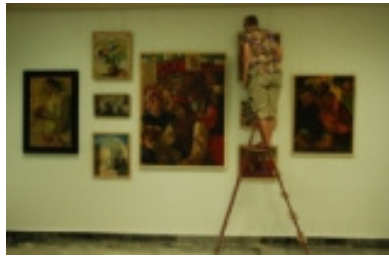
**11.** Following the opening ceremony and tour, guests gathered once again in the main entrance for a series of brief presentations—anecdotes and reminiscences—about Savitsky's life and work by several of his old friends and acquaintances. These included: Mr. Muyatdinov, the former Minister of Finance of Karakalpakstan; Mrs. Paizulaeva, Director, Berdach University Museum; Ms. Alvina Schpade; Mr. Bayram Matchanov, Director, Cultural Trade Union (also a People's Actor of Uzbekistan); Mrs. Kramova, owner of the wedding dress "*Kok Koylek*" on permanent display in the folk and applied arts section of the Museum; Ms. Tamara Turdimuratova, former Minister of Culture of Karakalpakstan and Director of the Art College; Mr. Abdullah Irembetov, artist; and Ms. Gulistan Galioulina, a former Museum staff member. This part of the event was a rare opportunity for key museum veterans such as Alvina Schpade, Valentina Sycheva, and Aygul Pirnazarova together with other local community and cultural leaders involved in the Museum's early history to discuss its development since 1966, and also their personal recollections of Savitsky. At the same time, everyone congratulated Marinika on her upcoming 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary and applauded the crucial role she continues to play in often very challenging circumstances. As Alvina noted '...without Marinika there would be no museum . . .'

**12.** Guests then viewed a now rarely seen 20-minute documentary film entitled "*The Museum Remains*" made by Soviet TV in 1986—two years after Savitsky's death. This was followed by a lively banquet—for which the Museum's staff had prepared many delicious traditional dishes, with drinks kindly provided by Gazprom. As one of several toasts in honor of Savitsky and the Museum, M. Huges Pernet, Ambassador of France in Uzbekistan offered support for the translation and printing in French of Marinika's forthcoming memoir of Savitsky.

**13.** Overall, more than 60 guests attended the event, including current and former Karakalpakstan government officials, representatives of the Academy of Sciences, other Nukus-based galleries, museums, and educational institutions, Gazprom (Karakalpakstan), Médecins sans Frontières, local artists and musicians, and members of the local media. A special guest was Mr. Eric Aubert, a former FoNM summer intern and now a cultural attaché at the French Embassy, Tashkent.

**14.** Later in the afternoon, following the departure of the principal guests, the banquet quickly resumed, with all Museum staff returning to the banquet hall for additional toasts and a more intimate celebration filled with camaraderie. The occasion clearly revealed the unique rôle that the Museum plays in the lives of its staff, for whom their work is not simply a series of tasks, but a vocation that, in some cases, has become a life-long commitment. It was also a moment for the staff to reflect on the importance of the Museum's place in, and outreach to the broader community in Nukus and Karakalpakstan. Finally, it was an opportunity to celebrate Marinika's anniversary and personal and professional dedication.

**15.** On the following page are several photographs that record various aspects of this special day in the Museum's recent history.



## Marinika Babanazarova's Biography



I, Marinika Maratovna Babanazarova, née Nurmukhamedova, was born on September 7, 1955 in Moscow *oblast* to the family of the renowned Karakalpak scholar Marat Nurmukhamedov.

Until 1966, our family lived in Nukus, Karakalpakstan, then moved to Tashkent. In 1972, after graduating from secondary school, I entered the Roman-Germanic languages faculty of Tashkent State University, from where I graduated with honours in 1977. In 1976, I married Damir Babanazarov, a physician, and moved back to Nukus, where I lectured and taught English grammar and style at Nukus State University. In 1983, Igor Savitsky, the founder of the Karakalpakstan State Museum of Art and a friend of our family, invited me to join the Museum's staff. The same year, I started to study art history by correspondence at Tashkent Art Institute; and, in 1990, I received my diploma in art history.

At the museum, I started as its scientific secretary and curator. In 1984, after Savitsky's death, I was appointed Director at the staff's request and according to Savitsky's will. I subsequently curated and participated in exhibitions in more than 20 cities of the former Soviet Union. Following Uzbekistan's independence in 1991, I managed five exhibitions abroad, for which I also prepared catalogues. The 1989 catalogue entitled "*Avangard, ostanovlenniy na begu*" (Avant garde on the Run) became a bestseller that year. Several exhibitions, such as *Forgotten Canvases* at the Oriental Arts Museum, Moscow, in 1988, at the Russian Museum, St.Petersburg, in 1991, and at the Chemnitz Museum (Germany) in 1995, as well as "*Les Survivants des Sables Rouges*" in Caen, France in 1998 under the patronage of French President Chirac were very successful and received worldwide recognition.

In 1993, I participated in the USIA-sponsored International Visitors Program for museum managers. I upgraded my knowledge at the Louvre Museum in Paris in 1998, the British Museum in 2000, and made study visits to many other European museums. I gave lectures at the Stockholm Ethnographical Museum (1999), the Austrian Oriental Society in Vienna (2002), and the Swedish Aral Sea Society (2003) and, to textile museums and related groups in the United States—Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, Indianapolis, Los Angeles, and Seattle—on Karakalpak folk art and textiles (2003). I also participated in conferences in Almaty on *Central Asia and Avant-garde Art* and in London on *Interpreting Asian Cultures in Museums*.

I am a member of the Board of many committees, including the Karakalpakstan Friends of Culture, and NGOs such as the Culture Fund, Fund for Preservation of Archaeological Monuments, "For Healthy Generation", and "Cultural Heritage". At the same time, I have established links with many foreign experts in restoration e.g. "Restaurateurs Sans Frontiers", museology, NGOs and foundations dedicated to the preservation of cultural values and community development. I have also met many outstanding international personalities such as US Vice President Albert Gore, the Prince of Wales, US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, Ambassador Jean Kennedy-Smith and many others. I was a member of Karakalpakstan's Parliament (1995-1999), of the Woman's Committee of Uzbekistan (1998-2001), and am currently a member of Uzbekistan's Central Elections Commission.

I have 2 daughters.