

Friends of Nukus Museum



Quarterly Newsletter No. 2

September 30, 2007

1. With greetings from Washington, D.C. (David), Istanbul (Kees), and Moscow (Thymen) – and, most importantly, from Nukus (Marinika and colleagues) – we hope that that you all had a fine summer holiday season and that this 2nd Quarterly Newsletter finds you and yours well. We also appreciated hearing from several of you and trust that this members' feedback will continue and intensify over the weeks and months ahead.

A. Friends of Nukus Museum Foundation

2. **First**, Thymen Kouwenaar, who together with Kees was instrumental in re-establishing the Friends of Nukus Museum, recently relocated from The Hague to Moscow as Cultural Attaché in The Netherlands' Embassy there. While Thymen will no longer able to act as FoNM Treasurer, his new position will hopefully facilitate support for the Museum and, indirectly, for the FoNM in Russia—especially with similar organizations in Moscow (Tretyakov), St. Petersburg (Hermitage) and possibly elsewhere in Russia and the CIS. Meanwhile, Ms. Hélène Degen, a retired physician, amateur painter, two-time visitor to Nukus and resident of The Hague (Rijswijk), has agreed to act as FoNM Treasurer temporarily.

3. **Second**, this development highlights the need to broaden the base of the FoNM's membership, in general, and its leadership, in particular. In this connection, and as noted in the first Newsletter, we would appreciate hearing from three Friends able and willing: (a) to volunteer as Treasurer and for the two additional Board positions 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 (initially for the remainder of 2007 but also for 2008 as well). 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 seven 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. **Third**, we plan to invite a geographically representative group of up to 7-9 eminent persons to become members of a proposed FoNM Advisory Council. In this connection, Professor Tursunali **Kuziev**, Chairman, Academy of Arts of Uzbekistan and a founding member of the FoNM in 2001, has kindly agreed to serve. Meanwhile, we would welcome FoNM members' ideas, nominations, and recommendations

5. **Fourth**, as indicated in the first Newsletter, we recommend, and very much hope that all

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

Friends can commit to an annual individual/ family membership contribution of US\$100 or its equivalent - of which at least US\$90 will be made available directly to the Museum (in cash or in kind) as a token of the

FoNM's support for conservation, cultural, educational, outreach, research and other activities or projects to be agreed annually with the Curator/Director. The remaining US\$10, for the first 1-2 years at least, will be retained by the FoNM to cover essential administrative expenses, bank maintenance charges, including the design and initial maintenance of a new FoNM web page. However, we expect most, if not all FoNM membership-related activities at the outset to be provided on a voluntary, *pro bono*

basis. In return for this annual contribution, FoNM members will receive: (a) an annual membership card; (b) the quarterly FoNM Newsletter (June, September, December, March), including “*News from Nukus*” by Marinika Babanazarova; and (c) free entry to the Museum. In addition, members will have the satisfaction of making a small but tangible contribution to the continuation and maintenance of the Museum’s cultural treasures. Over time, if successful in increasing the FoNM’s individual membership and, hopefully, in mobilizing a modest amount of corporate and/or foundation resources for specific projects, we hope it will be possible to envisage more ambitious activities and a higher level of FoNM support.

6. **Fifth**, in this context, Kees, Thyman and I remain committed to trying to increase the FoNM’s membership to 100 by the end of 2007, if possible—an ambitious goal, but one that, with the advice, contacts, and help of existing Members—especially current email addresses of former Members - we believe is feasible. This would also enable an increase in annual FoNM support to the Museum from about \$4,000 at present to over \$9,000.

B. News from Nukus¹



7. Last April, the Museum opened an exhibition devoted to the work of **Vasily Shukhaev**, marking the 120th anniversary of his birth (1887-1973). The Museum holds over sixty of the artist’s works, some of which are on permanent display and many of which have been replicated in numerous museum catalogues. While Shukhaev was born, lived most of his life, and died in Russia, he spent several years in France (1921-34) from where he visited Morocco and Spain. He was also a graphic artist and stage designer. A short article prepared by Irina Petrushina, the Museum’s Academic Secretary, is at Attachment 1 to this Newsletter.

8. Meanwhile, commencing October 2, the Museum will host an international symposium and related exhibition entitled “***In the Footsteps***

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

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 three months, the exhibition is planned to continue through December, 2007, possibly through March 2008. Irina Petrushina’s short article at Attachment 2 provides further background.

9. As reported in the first Newsletter, the US\$70,000 Christensen Foundation/British Council/UNESCO—financed restoration project undertaken by ***Restaurateurs sans Frontières***² (RSF) in 2004-05 has now been completed; and, RSF, now active elsewhere in Uzbekistan with government financing, is seeking additional sponsorship for continued work in Nukus. Following Marinika’s 2006 visit to Los Angeles, the Museum submitted a \$25,000 proposal to the **Getty Foundation** which, if approved, would permit resumption of RSF-assisted restoration activities, hopefully in 2008. Restoration of the Savitsky collection—ultimately a decades-long work-in-progress—obviously remains the Museum’s highest priority.

10. **Two exhibitions** of paintings from the Savitsky collection are now firmly planned **next year in Moscow—the first at the Tretyakov Gallery from June-August 2008** to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Gallery’s Institute of Restoration, which undertook significant restoration of paintings in the Savitsky collection during the 1970s-80s; and, the **second at the Museum of Oriental Art in the fall of 2008**. Further details of these two important new events will be reported in future Newsletters. In addition, the **Van Abbe museum** of modern art in **Eindhoven, The Netherlands** has also expressed interest in principle in hosting an exhibition, possibly in cooperation with other galleries or museums in Europe—an initiative that will be followed up by the FoNM, in consultation with Marinika, in the immediate future.

11. Meanwhile, the British Council-financed “***Museum on Wheels***”³ cultural 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 rich cultural (Karakalpak) heritage for the first time—is scheduled to end in

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

³ Further details may be found on the British Council’s website: www.britishcouncil.org/uzbekistan

December 2007. Fortunately, the Swiss Development Cooperation Organization (SECO) recently agreed to provide \$5,000, covering six schools in three districts (rayons). This program, which in its basic model or design costs about \$3,000 monthly, remains a high priority for the Museum, culturally and politically in Karakalpakstan overall. Given its relatively low cost and potentially high benefit, it should be a **priority candidate for direct FoNM support in 2008**.

12. As reported earlier and based on a recent (mid-2007) cost estimate provided by the Museum, the planned *biography of Igor Savitsky*, already about 80% completed, needs about \$10,000 equivalent to finance remaining archival and field research in Kiev, Nice and Moscow. Gallimard, a French publisher, is also reportedly interested in publishing. Given the overall importance of this project, the Museum's interest in completing and publishing the biography in time for the 25th anniversary of Savitsky's death in 2009, and its priority as a **candidate for direct FoNM support in 2008**, the FoNM Board Chair has committed personally to underwrite its cost in two tranches—\$5,000 by end-October 2007 and \$5,000 by end-December 2007. This will permit Marinika and her colleagues to plan the necessary field work in late-2007/early 2008 and to schedule completion of the book hopefully by mid-2008. When complete, we hope that its translation from Russian into (e.g.) English and French can be arranged (informally and voluntarily) through the FoNM's membership/network.

13. Similarly, plans are now being made for **FoNM members/volunteers to translate**, from French into English and eventually into Russian, the catalogue prepared for the 1998 exhibition of paintings from the Savitsky collection in Caen, France (either wholly or certain essays). Assuming copyright issues, if any, can be resolved without difficulty, we hope that the Museum will be able to publish these essays, with FoNM support, during 2008.

14. Finally, a major feature article on the Nukus Museum's Savitsky collection is currently under preparation for publication in the **next issue** of the new semi-annual "**Steppe**" (Central Asia) magazine in **November 2007**. Marinika is also currently writing an article about Savitsky for the catalogue of an exhibition of Russian 1920s art planned for Moscow's "Galeev Gallery" later this year.

C. Next Steps

15. The purpose of this second FoNM Quarterly Newsletter has been: first, to brief members about the recent FoNM developments; and second, to share recent news and views from the Museum itself.

16. Against this background, next steps during the remaining three months of 2007 include:

- **first**, design of FoNM membership cards and a simple FoNM information brochure or leaflet;
- **second**, collection of FoNM membership contributions for the first year (July 1-2007 - June 30,2008);
- **third**, design of a FoNM website and rinter-active FoNM blog—to facilitate communication and dialogue within and between FoNM and the Museum;
- **fourth**, recruitment of 50+ additional individual Friends and an assessment of possibilities for corporate and institutional support for specific FoNM/Museum projects;
- **fifth**, initial planning for a possible FoNM trip to Uzbekistan (Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva) and Karakalpakstan (Nukus) in the fall of 2008; and
- **finally**, completion of a brief statement of options for the FoNM's medium-term development strategy—for subsequent "virtual" discussion among FoNM members and for finalization by end-2007.

17. 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 ideas or initiatives Friends may have to help make the new FoNM become an internationally sustainable effort and reality. In this context, Kees, David and Rada, to be joined October 2 by Marinika in Nukus, have recently begun a semi-monthly SKYPE conference-call on the first and third Tuesday of each month. Any Friend interested in joining the conversation would be warmly welcomed!

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Vasily Shukhaev (1887–1973)



Last April, the Museum opened an exhibition devoted to the art of Vasily Shukhaev (1887–1973), marking the 120th anniversary of his birth. The Museum possesses over sixty of the artist's works, some of which are on permanent display and many of which have been printed in museum catalogues. The current exhibition is a tribute to the significance of a painter, whose art is well known in the artistic world.

Vasily Ivanovitch Shukhaev, a native of Moscow, started his artistic journey at the Stroganov College, where he studied etching. Later, he went to study at the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts in the studio of D.N. Kardovskiy (1906-1912) and started to participate in exhibitions at an early age. His thesis work "*Bacchanalia*" was misunderstood by his academic superiors, owing to its frankness and direct link to the art of Rubens. Subsequently, Shukhaev spent two years in Italy, teaching at the Society for Encouragement of Young Painters in Rome. Starting in 1921, he lived in Paris, where he participated in numerous exhibitions and painted portraits upon request; and, later that year, together with A. Yakovlev, he established an art school in Montmartre. While resident in France, Shukhaev undertook two major trips to Morocco and to Spain. Later, in the 1960s, sketches made there resulted in a series of works entitled "*Morocco*".

In 1934, he returned to Russia, where he worked in the Academy of Arts (Leningrad) and the Academy of Architecture (Moscow), as well as in the Mariinskiy Theatre. In early 1937, he was subjected to repression and sentenced to eight years in concentration camps for 'suspected espionage'. While in the camps, he designed plays for the Magadan Music and Drama theatre named after M. Gorky, whose collective in those days consisted of convicts.

In 1947, Shukhaev settled in Georgia, where he was one of the leading teachers at the Academy of Arts in Tbilisi. He spent the last thirteen years of his life in Moscow, where he died in 1973.

The current exhibition impresses with the sheer diversity of the painter's art: he is represented as a painter, graphic artist, and stage designer. His early work is represented with scenic landscapes made in France ("*Landscape-Turin*", 1929, "*Arganta-Canal*", 1929). His 1925 works "*Naked Woman with a Basin*" and "*Nude lying with a Blue Fabric*" underline his adherence to classical art and the influence of Rubens.

As noted above, the "Morocco" series was created in the 1960s in Moscow ("*Moroccan Woman in Pink*", 1961, "*Blind Man*", 1961, "*Trading*", "*Negro Woman with Son*"), evoking the painter's trips to Morocco. The cycle of works called "Abkhazian epoch" ("*Large Landscape*", 1961, "*Brothers' Sister*", "*Sasrykva's Wife*") represents the painter's later art : decorative and large in scale.

Shukhaev's graphic work is represented with stage design sketches for plays and sketches of costumes ("*Lev Gurych Sinichkin*", "*Carmen-Sketch for Toreador's Costume*", 1925 and "*Carmen-Spaniard's Costume*", 1925).

Irina Petrushina.
Academic Secretary,
Savitsky Museum

In the Footsteps of Ancient Civilizations

Commencing October 2, the Nukus Museum will host an exhibition entitled “*In the Footsteps of Ancient Civilizations*” commemorating the centennial of the birth of Sergey Pavlovitch Tolstov, a prominent scholar of Central Asian history and culture. The exhibition is taking place within the framework of a major international symposium “*Aral–Crossroads of Cultures*”, organized by the Institute of History, Archeology and Ethnography of the Karakalpak Branch of the Uzbekistan Academy of Sciences, with support from Sydney University, the Nukus Museum, UNESCO (Uzbekistan), and the Russian Embassy, as well as the district Khokimiyats of Ellikala and Beruniy, Karakalpakstan.

The main purpose of the Symposium itself is to present the results of recent archeological digs at the Tashkyrman oasis (Kazakly-yatkan (Akshahan-kala) conducted by the Institute of History, Archeology and Ethnography together with representatives of Sydney University—continuing research started originally by the prominent scholar and organizer of the Khorezm Expedition, Sergey Pavlovitch Tolstov (1907-1976).

A graduate of Moscow State University, Sergey Tolstov came to Khorezm for the first time in 1929 as an ethnographer. The Khorezm Expedition, launched in 1937, revealed the actual Khorem of Gerodot, Biruni, Makdisi, Istahri, Yakut to science and brought world renown to the author and inspirer of major discoveries in the soils of ancient Khorezm. Thanks to its particular climatic conditions, this ancient oasis in the lower reaches of the Amudarya river became a natural open-air museum, amazing everyone who sees it for the first time. Remembered Tolstov: “...everywhere, among the frozen waves of sand dunes, either in dense gatherings or singular islands lay endless ruins of castles, forts, fortifications, and entire cities. Binoculars, expanding the horizon, were opening new ruins, some of which appeared very close, and one could see the walls, gates and towers, and others remote, appearing in indistinct silhouettes... We were at the gates of ancient Khorezm, on the threshold of the unknown past”.

For many years, Tolstov was a professor at Moscow State University, holding the Chair of Ethnography Chair and, from 1943-45, he served as the Dean of its History Faculty. He fought and was wounded in the 2nd World War. In 1942, he was appointed Director, Institute of Ethnography of the USSR Academy of Sciences, where he worked for 25 years. Tolstov was an enthusiastic researcher, producing more than 300 works dealing with various aspects of the archeology, ethnography, and history of Central Asia, as well as with oriental studies in general. Among his major works are: the monograph “*Ancient Khorezm*” (1948), for which he was awarded a State Prize; “*In the Footsteps of ancient Khorezm Civilization*” (1948); and “*Along the ancient deltas of Oks and Yaksart*” (1926).

The current exhibition summarizes the results of many years of archeological surveys—starting with the Khorezm Expedition and ending with recent findings by local archeologists dating from ancient times to the middle ages. It will also include several sensational new findings—ancient examples of murals from the 2nd century BC discovered in Tashkyrman oasis at Kazakly-yatkan (Akshahan-kala). As the archeologist Vadim Yagodin says, these are “*vivid portrayals of crowned human figures, most probably hitherto unknown Khorezm kings*”.

After the exhibition’s formal opening, the international symposium’s work will move to Ellikala and Beruni rayons, where a second field seminar “*Archeology of Ancient Tashkyrman Oasis*” will take place.

Irina Petrushina,
Academic Secretary,
Savitsky Museum