

KIRILL DATSOUK



Kirill Datsouk (1974) was born in Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, where his father was stationed as a geologist. Sakhalin Island, situated just off the east coast of Russia and just north of Japan, is known as a former Russian penal colony. For centuries it had been alternately in Russian and Japanese hands, but since the end of the Second World War it is Russian. Kirill's father had a large collection of dug up Japanese sculptures and ceramics. Not only a geologist, but also a collector and an artist at heart himself – it was the wish of Wladimir Datsouk's learned but realistic father that he should acquire a 'real job' next to painting – he had filled his house with his collections and works. So Kirill spent the first years of his life surrounded by Russian and Japanese art, furniture, porcelain and sculpture and the brushes, paint tubes and canvasses of his father. Outside there was the magnificent landscape of the island with its mountains, rivers, rocks and forests. At the age of seven, he was sent to a language boarding school in St. Petersburg – then still Leningrad – where a brother of his father lived; his family followed a couple of years later. It brought them nearer to their roots: Wladimir Datsouk's forebears were born in pre-war Poland. Graduated from the Academy at about forty, Kirill's father became a teacher of Graphic Arts at Repin University and later Head of the Printing Classes.

Art in various forms was very much part of the Russian education. By the time Kirill was eleven, he had followed four years of ceramic and painting lessons, making small sculptures, gouaches, etc. and linocuts. He next applied for Art School and was admitted. Thanks to his teacher, study trips and international exchanges were part of the schedule, so at an early stage Kirill came in contact with Crimean, Italian, German and American art. When however the Academy of Art – part of the Ilya Repin Leningrad Institute for Painting, Sculpture and Architecture – changed its course to architecture and graphics instead of sculpture and painting, Kirill at the age of fifteen switched to Architecture. Three years later he continued this study at university level, but more and more he realized that an architecture where politics played an important role and copying seemed a natural thing did not suit him, killing all his lust for study and creation. And so at last he arrived where he definitely belonged by nature: in the Painting Section of the University. After showing examples of his work, he was admitted to the painting class of Alexander Belov (1958), then the master of the Preparatory Classes. Kirill is full of praise for his teacher: 'Thanks to him, I began to understand art. Everything I know about painting, I learned from him.'

Since then, art and the study of it filled his life full time. Though he made a little sidestep to Surrealism, it was clear that Realism – in all its aspects – was his field. After two preparatory years with Belov, he worked in the studio of Wasily Wasilievich Sokolov (1915-2013). This old master talked to his students not only as if they were of the same age but also as if they had as much experience of life as he had. These days, Kirill sometimes remembers his words on certain subjects and realizes that only now he can analyse them and really understand what they mean. Till long after the Perestrojka and Glasnost politics the Academy education had been free – contrary to Art School – but students were expected to teach, make portraits for the collection of the University Museum, paintings as study material during the lessons, etc. The generation after Kirill had to pay for its education. In the 1990's study trips through Europa became much easier. Kirill joined exhibitions in Russia and abroad from 1993 onwards – three times together with his father – and in 1995 had his first solo exhibition in Shwabens House, a restaurant in St. Petersburg.

Six years later, in 2001, he finished his studies with distinction with the painting *Homeless*

People (2000-2001). It depicted a scene from the 1990's, in words of Kirill 'uncovering the desolate situation of the poor and the indifference or still worse ruthlessness of the Russian authorities towards their compatriots'. Working on the project, he spoke with his poor and homeless models, 'these people, who often were very intelligent and well-educated and now were facing the end of their lives on the streets ...' His compositional approach of the theme has been very cleverly done.

There is a lot of dynamic in this painting – as if we follow the steps of the young businessman on the right as in a slow running film; light for him they were, those passing footsteps, but hardly bearable for the homeless. Kirill's painting was chosen to represent St. Petersburg at the All-Russia Exhibition of the best degree works in Moscow in 2003.

Since his graduation, Kirill Datsouk took part in many group exhibitions and Painters Festivals both in Russia and abroad, for instance in Poland, Finland, Belorussia, Greece, China, the Netherlands, France and Montenegro. As a result, examples of his work can be found in galleries, museum and private collections all over the world. He has travelled a lot in only a short life. The Festivals in his eyes are inevitably necessary for commissions and contacts, but also like a 'Circus'. Indeed, man of the world as he is, this artist *pur sang* also very much is a man of his own, private world.