This is the first ever academic publication fully covering the life and work of Mikhail Matveyevich Shvartsman (1926–1997). The master called his works hieratures.

The book includes previously unknown statements by Mikhail Shvartsman, excerpts from the memoirs of those who personally knew him and reproductions of all his works. The articles by leading experts on modern art offer a deep and detailed analysis of the artist’s oeuvre.

This book is likely to be of interest to experts, collectors and all lovers of art.
ВВЕДЕНИЕ
... A miracle does not depend on us. With what can one compare the joy of a trumpet pouring light, the voice of the light. Terrible only to miss, to omit, the promised – never to learn. Oh, what a torture it is! And what a torture of joy, the slow, drawn-out, sweet pain of learning. Thousands of torturous metamorphoses dying under the quick-sighted hand. The sluggish hand becomes prophetic, each finger ends in an eye following (feloniously) the birth of the sign (£). Vision is so graced by pain. How rare it is! At night time, weary, weary, weary, you wander, not discerning the path, fearing to shake the dust of paradise from your eyes.

You wake up again audacious in hope, and again victims and victims (of the finest forms) for the sake of the last promised land, every time the last. That is the heavy prayer through deeds.

You are sometimes trampled into the dirt and, grief-stricken, you wail in bloody tears of self-loathing ...

Yes, yes! Only homeward to the abodes!

Mikhail Shvartsman

13 February 1991
In my childhood, I remember our family constantly moving from place to place, owing to my father's imprisonment. He was arrested in 1938 and died at a camp in Nahiy Tagil in 1942. That was what they later told my mother.

I began to draw at an early age. Several times, my mother attempted to get me into art school, but all her efforts ended in failure. I ran away from every school. In 1950, after serving five years in the army, I joined first the metal and then the monumental departments of the Higher School of Art and Industry (former Stroganov School). The nominal length of the course was eight years, but I skipped two years and finished early, in 1956.

In my first years at the school of art, I was interested in Byzantine and Old Russian art, frescoes and icons. Some student friends and I got together to quiver (rotch, латышское слово (от экономики) распевали) discuss the art of icon-painting. We even organized an expedition to the St Ferapon and St Cyril Monasteries in northern Russia.

I then passed through a period of interest in nineteenth- and twentieth-century French art, studying Cézanne, Matisse, Degas, Derain, Picasso and the Fauvists. Many poked fun at me, for the general idol at that time was Lyra Bein.

While still in the army, I married Irina Alexeyevna Nikolskaya, who gave birth to our daughter Natasha in 1951. As I was a married man with a family, I also kept myself slightly apart from the other students. In those years, I spent more time with my teachers Pavel Kuznetsov, Alexander Kuprin and Kazenin. A former student of Konstantin Istomin, Kazenin was an outstanding, magnetic personality (for which he appears to have been later expatied from the noting).

After graduating from art school, I had a series of jobs, designing industrial art, book graphic art and posters. I took whatever work I could find, as I had to feed my wife and young daughter. But I continued to paint in my spare time.

I did not have any close contacts with our "special" artists — only occasional acquaintance. I knew some of them from exhibitions. My attitude towards such artists was one of deference, rather than love. By that time I already had other ideas, other lines of thought, other professional tasks.

In the 1960s, I met Vera Kabakova at the musical concerts of Andrei Volkovson. Although I later struck up an acquaintance with Dmitry Frolovskiy and Vladimir Nemeshkin, I tended to associate more with writers — Kruchevsky, Dombrovsky and Steinberg the elder. I was also acquainted with Sergei Barkhin, George Costakis and Savely Yamschikov. Dmitry Sandiakov was a regular guest.

In the 1970s, I befriended many poets from St Petersburg and Moscow — Elena Schwartz, Victor Krivulin, Olga Sedakova and Sasha Yamschikov.

Despite these friendships, I was regarded as something of a recluse. This was not something I specially cultivated; it was merely my character. I had a personal distaste for the prevailing an of bohemianism at that time.

In the 1960s, I mainly worked in poster design and for publishing houses. I was harassed and oppressed by this lifestyle, which entailed much feverish work and paid little. There was a lot of unpleasantness and racked nerves. I therefore jumped at the chance when, in 1966, Alla Levashova, a corresponding member of the Academy of Arts, invited me to become head designer of the graphic sector at the newly-opened Special Bureau of Art and Construction.

I put together my own group — or school — of young artists at the Special Bureau of Art and Construction. We were the focus for all those who, it would now be said, were interested in getting culture moving. The central principle of the school was my "heretic" concept. Some members contributed to exhibitions of industrial graphic art or book illustrations, along with other nonconformist artists; others did not exhibit at all. Personally, I do not consider it important whether or not an artist participated in the unofficial exhibitions of that time. The division of artists into official and unofficial, according to whether or not they contributed to underground art life, is, in my opinion, a device later thought up by art historians.

We ourselves designed and studied the designs of Kazimir Malevich, Mikhail Larionov, Vladimir Tatlin and Natalia Goncharova. It is widely held that the aforementioned artists regarded design as only of secondary importance. This view, however, is quite wrong. Malevich, Rodchenko and other artists of the 1920s treated design as the most important constituent. It was a natural union of art and architecture, a single creative process.

As far as my own oeuvre of the 1930s and 1960s was concerned, all my early works were linked to the heretic concept. The relationship with the experience of man in life and his experience in death. In life, man creates an icon of himself; in the face of death, he leaves an iconic trace of himself entombed. This is like a spiritual birth in death, which also creates its own countenance, its own icon. Work on this countenance was the main aim of my early heretarians. Besides professional mystique and free historical orientation, I believed it very important to achieve a high degree of spiritual concentration. My study of twentieth-century art led me to the thought that, with his Suprematism and innovative ideas, Malevich was nevertheless not quite on his own. Take, for example, Malevich’s Suprematist (1913) and icons of the Saviour in Majesty (12th to 16th centuries). These works clearly have something in common. To a certain extent, they emanate from each other. Speaking in the language of today, the icon is Suprematist. I believe that Malevich was moving along these lines. And I think that the deeper an artist’s roots are, the more original he is.

Sometimes around the mid-1960s, I crossed over to my current emblematic-architectural orientation. Work proceeded not mechanically, but organically-metamorphically, first surging forwards, then going backwards. These symbols appeared at the same time as the countenances.

While the stylistic links were clearly visible in the early hieratures, the sign gradually acquired independent and theological meaning. Yet even when the emblematic literature developed temperamentally, I did not depart from the countenances. They continued to appear in my works, and the countenance or proto-phenomenal hieratures appear to this day. Moreover, I think that I must return to them more fundamentally at a later date. They may well form an alternative to our avant-garde future, particularly as it is now clear that the Sots Art line, which developed so carelessly, leads to an impasse.

"Thoughts and memories are like clouds in the sky; they do not fit into verbal form. I am not, in general, a fan of biographical memoirs: my path in life has been too easy — children’s home, colony, army. My father disappeared in the camps. It is sometimes told… in a conversation… spontaneously. I am confused by questions. When you speak, everything seems that way, yet perhaps it is not. Everything gets mixed up, sometimes it disappeared in the camps. It is sometimes told … in a conversation … spontaneously. I am confused by quests— of biographical memoirs. My path in life has been far from easy — children’s home, colony, army. My father

Mikhail Shvartsman

Lyubertsy, 11 February 1968

“SHVARTSMAN ON HIMSELF *

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Man, in his sacramental sense, will always be interesting, above all to artists…

Mikhail Shvartsman

Moscow, 22 November 1987

* For compiled on the basis of an interview given by Mikhail Shvartsman to Iaroslav Kashuk in 1987. Mikhail Shvartsman read the print-outs of the conversation and made several corrections to the text. The heading was provided by Irina Shvartsman.

**Objects:**


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Mikhail Matveyevich Shvartsman was born in Moscow on 4 June 1926. His father, Matvey Grigorievich Shvartsman, was an entrepreneur. “He had constant brushes with the law. He was sent to prison on several occasions, bought himself off each time, before he found himself behind the barred wire again in 1938.” His father dies in a prison camp in 1942 and is buried in a common grave in Nizhny Tagil.

His mother, Rakhil Isaacovna Fishmann (1899–1963), works as a sanitary inspector.

In the early 1930s, the family lives for a while in Nemchinovka outside Moscow, where Kuzma Malvich also lives. Mikhail’s mother shows her son’s works to the artist, who expresses his approval of the young boy’s art. Mikhail remembered that Malvich particularly liked drawings of a blue house.

Spends his early childhood in Losino-Ostrovsky outside Moscow. Enters primary school in 1934. Describes this period of his life in his childhood diary. Holds a competition with his neighbour at school to see who can draw the most strokes. Although his neighbour draws more and Mikhail less, the latter’s are of better quality. A fight breaks out between the boys at break time. Mikhail writes: “And so began my early childhood. He advises his mother to send him to art school. She does so, but he does not settle in there.

Following the death of her husband, Mikhail’s mother remarries. Mikhail’s stepfather is Moisei Annovich Goldenberg.

In the early 1930s, the family lives for a while in Njemchovka outside Moscow, where Kazimir Malevich also lives. Mikhail’s mother shows her son’s works to the artist, who expresses his approval of the young boy’s art. Mikhail remembered that Malevich particularly liked drawings of a blue house.

Finishes seventh grade. Nazi Germany attacks the Soviet Union and he is evacuated to the town of Syzran. Works in a foundry at the age of fifteen.

Returns to Moscow with his mother and younger brother. Works as a loader to help his mother. His father has, by this time, died in prison camp.

Moves with his wife and daughter to the town of Lyubertsy outside Moscow, leaving the eighteen-metre room in a communal flat in which he had been living. His wife is pregnant and he must provide for the family. Mikhail dreams of being an artist. But he must have a degree to be able to do that. Many of his friends have already been conscripted into the army. He misses his brother, who is in the army, and regrets that he did not have more time to study.

Enrolls at the former Stroganov School of Art in Moscow after five years in the army. Enters the metal and then monumental art and sculpture departments of the Higher School of Art and Industry (former Stroganov School) in Moscow. Awarded leave, travels to Moscow and marries Iraida.

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1944

Meets Iraida Alexandrovna Nikolskaya. The two become close friends, sharing a mutual interest in poetry and painting.

1945

Fate decides otherwise and he is called up into the Soviet Army in May 1945. Studies at military academy. Writes in a letter to Iraida on 10 October 1945: “I experience a burning thirst for knowledge, knowledge, knowledge and I so want to read, create and think. It is painful to feel chained and squeezed into narrow borders. I regret the empty days spent doing nothing and each non-productive hour. I want to immortalise every single second.” Sent to a transit point for making a workplace tote. Works as a sapper, combing the frontlines for mines.

1946

Awards leave, travels to Moscow and marries Iraida.

1950

Turns five years in the army, enters the metal and then monumental art and sculpture departments of the Higher School of Art and Industry (former Stroganov School) in Moscow.

1951

Birth of daughter Nadezhda.

1957

Moves with his wife and daughter to the town of Lyubertsy outside Moscow, leaving the eighteen-metre room in a communal flat in which he had been living. His wife is pregnant and he must provide for the family. Mikhail dreams of being an artist. But he must have a degree to be able to do that. Many of his friends have already been conscripted into the army. He misses his brother, who is in the army, and regrets that he did not have more time to study.

1956

Graduates from art school after six years, instead of the normal eight, as an external student.


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Mikhail at the age of two with his parents Rakhil and Matvei Shvartsman. Nizhny Novgorod, 3 July 1928

Mother and grandfather Blutenburg, 1917

Photograph inscribed on the back To Grandmother and Aunt Gita in loving memory – moustached grandson and nephew, Misha 3 July 1943

Photograph inscribed on the back You will only see me if you look long and hard into my eyes – which only happens when you look with sorrow. Yours, M.

Iraida Shvartsman. August 1948

(Mikhail Shvartsman working at the Education Pavilion of the Exhibition of Economic Achievements. 1957)

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(Mikhail Shvartsman at art school. 1950s)

Mikhail Shvartsman at art school. 1950s

Mikhail Shvartsman (third from the left) at military training while at art school. 1950s

Mikhail Shvartsman (bottom) at military training. 1950s

Mikhail Shvartsman working at the Education Pavilion of the Exhibition of Economic Achievements. 1957

(Apartment 3, Block 4, 63 Eighth of March Street) which they had shared with his wife’s relatives.

1957-58
Principal designer of the Education Pavilion at the Exhibition of Economic Achievements in Moscow.

1958
Quite the Exhibition of Economic Achievements, finding it backward and uninspiring. Dreams of becoming a painter, but knows that he has a family to keep. Holds a series of jobs, designing industrial art, books, advertisements and posters.

Late 1950s
Develops the first stage of the defamiliarisation (ostranenie) concept (strangeness “not of this world”). Paints Carousel (1957), Glass of Water (1957), Pink Earth (1957), Torebeyevo Women (1958), Pregnant Woman (1957) and Woman with Child (1958).

1961
Visits Daghestan and paints a cycle of pictures, including Kubachi, Daghestan, Green Head, Two Heads with Black Plaits, Aqueduct and Landscape.

Continues the period of defamiliarisation in painting and graphic art in Flutist, Playboys (1958) and Fox, Cub (1962).

In the 1960s, meets many unofficial artists, whom he engages in a tactical dialogue, showing them “deference, rather than love”. He has a different way of thinking and pursues other tasks: “Demonic forces, tempests and cataclysms are tamed by the sun – the festival of light. God is the higher clarity. To create a festival implies dissolving in God. That is the basis of my cause in life … Organic transformation is the basis of the new art.”
Mikhail Shvartsman and Yulik Oleinikov (poet), Leonard Daniltsev, Iraida Shvartsman.

Lyubertsy, 11 February 1968

Mikhail Shvartsman lived in this house in Lyubertsy from 1957 to 1971, occupying the flat with the two windows on the ground floor nearest the door. Photographed in 2003

V. Olenikov (poet), Leonard Daniltsev, Iraida Shvartsman, Mikhail Shvartsman and Yuli Lyubertsy, 11 February 1968

Frequent contacts with artists, poets and musicians. Demonstrating his excellent understanding of poetry and music, his thoughts and statements are highly rated by his milieu.

Many artists are influenced by his painting and begin copying his style, showing their works at different exhibitions. Mikhail is shocked at these hasty and unprofessional imitations: “Good God, I look at all this like a peacock at its feet [a peacock has particularly ugly legs]. Is this really how they see me?”

Creates the concept of hieratic painting in Lyubertsy: “The relationship with the experience of man in life and his experience in death. In life, man creates an icon of himself; in the face of death, he leaves an iconic trace of himself entombed. This is like a spiritual birth in death.”

The Defamiliarisation cycle dominates in the early 1960s. This is a pre-death structure: “This is the last utmost expression in the form of a still sensual world.” The Defamiliarisation cycle is followed by the Countenances, as he initially calls these works: “The countenance is the start of a new life.” Works include the MetaLisk cycle (1962–76) and Mikhail is a Proper Noun (1962). Later crosses over to emblematic-architectonic hierature, in which the hieratic symbol acquires independent spiritual and theological meaning: “Signifying the end of the heartless preoccupation with everything technical and standing on an equal par with the grand styles of grand architecture.”

Associates with the artist Sergei Barkhin and the collector George G. Dauman at the Moscow Institute of Engineering and Physics.

Heads a group of young artists and founds a school of brand label design based on the hieratic concept, creating trademarks for light industry: “We want to break away from dry, mundane design … and illustrative false-significant posing … with new transformations, we spontaneously incarnate the eternal dream of a magical Sign … we seek the fullness of designation, high emblematic independence and the happy silence of hieratic taurus.” The group designs labels and studies similar works by Kazimir Malevich, Vladimir Tatlin, El Lissitzky and Alexander Rodchenko.

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Creates three monumental panels from cement and smalt with the All-Union Exhibition of Monumental Art.

Death of the artist’s mother. At this difficult period finishes painting Mama (begun in 1962).

1966

Alia Levashova, corresponding member of the Academy of Arts, invites him to take up the post of principal designer at the Special Bureau of Art and Construction.

Meets Yeryy Schiffer, a director who later becomes a theologian. Schiffer’s attempts to become Shvartsman’s ideologue are unsuccessful. Differences emerge when Schiffer leads all contact away from painting. His capricious demands evoke the dislike of the artist: “Either name or bum your works.” Shvartsman believes: “Any naming [verbal naming] of the hierature is merely a tribute to the common emotional ‘regulation’, that is, the custom of ‘storing’ and crowning with a ‘name tag’. There is no genuine, i.e. mysterial, requirement for this.”

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The artist Mikhail Shemyakin is impressed by Shvartsman’s painting and travels from Leningrad to see the artist. Shemyakin later emigrates to Paris, where he implements what he has seen.

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Mikhail Shvartsman. 1965

Iraida, Mikhail and Nadezhda Shvartsman. 1968

Mikhail and Nadezhda Shvartsman at the Implygrafmash exhibition

Facade of the artist’s house in Lyubertsy. Photographed in 2003

Mikhail Shvartsman. Lyubertsy, 24 August 1969

Mikhail and Nadezhda Shvartsman

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1969

Mikhail Shemyakin's friend, the art historian Vladimir Ivanov, visits Shvartsman from Leningrad. When he marries and stays in Moscow, he becomes a close friend of the artist, who shares his ideas with the critic in long conversations with him. In the early 1970s, Ivanov writes an article inspired by Shvartsman entitled Metaphysical Synthetism.

1970

Following his mother's death, moves with his family into her former room in a communal flat on Third Cable Street in Moscow. Not possessing his own studio, he paints where he lives.

1972

Visited at Third Cable Street by the Czech art historian Jindrich Chalupecky, who has already visited him in Lyuberty in the late 1960s. Looking at the artist's works, he makes the succinct comment: "Suggestive Shvartsman." The artist is touched by his understanding. Jindrich Chalupecky visits the artist with his translator Joseph Premyslak. Chalupecky says that he is writing essays on the artist for a British magazine called Sluško (International), and would like to include Shvartsman, but has very little time. When Shvartsman receives a translation of the essay on him, he finds a complete lack of understanding of his works. He writes a withering letter to Chalupecky: "Shvartsman is a lack of time and place are no excuse for inaccuracy, indiscernment and superficiality, evoking dissatisfaction and displeasure."

"Both of the artist's grandson Dmitry: ‘I thought that I was only participating in life and only now, this summer, when Nadadchik was suffering both pains, and afterwards, did I understand, in a dream and perturbation, how I love my daughter to death and how tenderly dear she is to me.”

1974

Visited at home by several young followers, who seem dedicated to hieratic painting. Despite the mental anguish caused by his first experience of working with students, he decides to make a second attempt and agrees to become their teacher, having already crystallised his concept in solitary. Throughout the 1970s, he experiences a need for spiritual contact, which students, hope and understanding. The artist founds the hieratic school of painting in the studio of one of the artists, Anatoly Chaschinsky at Sokolniki, sharing his ideas and painting method.

1975

Shvartsman meets the art critic Boris Groys when holidaying in Koktebel in the Crimea. Groys consequently pays a return visit to the artist and writes articles on him. Shvartsman later claims: "Groys’s views evolved from a shrewd and fresh prophetic intuition to snobishness."

1977

Collector George Costakis emigrates and acquires three paintings and free drawings from Shvartsman. The artist presents him with a drawing and Costakis promises to exhibit the works in the West. Shvartsman finds it very hard to part with his works – "I have betrayed my children" – and suffers a long period of depression. He is helped by the prospect of being able to acquire boards, flax cloth and paints and the chance to make money to keep up Chaschinsky’s studio and support his family.

Paints in tempera on chalk primed boards. French journalist Paul Thorez visits Shvartsman. Returning to France, he accuses Mikhail Shemyakin of plagiarism in an article entitled A Career on the Misery of Others in Quotidien de Paris (No. 807, 1977): "These interviews and texts, which he has compiled for his catalogues, describe him as the founder of the 'Leningrad group' – which existed only in his imagination – and the 'metaphysical synthetism' theory of painting. We know the creator of this theory, his name is Shvartsman, he lives in Moscow and works on his own. Thorez states the article without the knowledge of Shvartsman, who does not agree with some of his conclusions. Shemyakin sues Thorez. Shvartsman supports Shemyakin by sending a telegram to the court: "I did not write the article on metaphysical synthetism." "This was enough for Shemyakin to win the case. As Shvartsman explains, "The article on metaphysical synthetism, written by the young Vladimir Ivanov [very rare], was inspired by myself and my work. This is not a concept, but a declaration, in which I agree with far from everything."

Visited by the French art historian Jean-Claude Marcadé.

Throughout the 1970s, associates with such talented poets from Moscow and St Petersburg as Elena Schvartz, Victor Kriukov, Olga Sedakova, Alexander Velichansky and Dmitry Bobshever, who dedicate verses to him. Complains of creative loneliness: "loneliness like the loneliness of a monster that has outlived its species" (Eston Blas). He

1977

Shvartsman and Dmitriy Gorokhov on the balcony of his house on Third Cable Street 1977

Mikhail Shvartsman and his grandson Dmitry 1977

Collector George Costakis emigrates and acquires three paintings and free drawings from Shvartsman. The artist presents him with a drawing and Costakis promises to exhibit the works in the West. Shvartsman finds it very hard to part with his works – "I have betrayed my children" – and suffers a long period of depression. He is helped by the prospect of being able to acquire boards, flax cloth and paints and the chance to make money to keep up Chaschinsky’s studio and support his family.

Paints in tempera on chalk primed boards. French journalist Paul Thorez visits Shvartsman. Returning to France, he accuses Mikhail Shemyakin of plagiarism in an article entitled A Career on the Misery of Others in Quotidien de Paris (No. 807, 1977): "These interviews and texts, which he has compiled for his catalogues, describe him as the founder of the 'Leningrad group' – which existed only in his imagination – and the 'metaphysical synthetism' theory of painting. We know the creator of this theory, his name is Shvartsman, he lives in Moscow and works on his own. Thorez states the article without the knowledge of Shvartsman, who does not agree with some of his conclusions. Shemyakin sues Thorez. Shvartsman supports Shemyakin by sending a telegram to the court: "I did not write the article on metaphysical synthetism." "This was enough for Shemyakin to win the case. As Shvartsman explains, "The article on metaphysical synthetism, written by the young Vladimir Ivanov [very rare], was inspired by myself and my work. This is not a concept, but a declaration, in which I agree with far from everything."

Visited by the French art historian Jean-Claude Marcadé.

Throughout the 1970s, associates with such talented poets from Moscow and St Petersburg as Elena Schvartz, Victor Kriukov, Olga Sedakova, Alexander Velichansky and Dmitry Bobshever, who dedicate verses to him. Complains of creative loneliness: "loneliness like the loneliness of a monster that has outlived its species" (Eston Blas). He
1979

The hieratic school of painting splits up, leaving the founder disavowed. Deprived of Chaschinsky’s studio, he concentrates on graphic art at home until 1982, when he begins to work with Dmitry Gorokhov, his last remaining student. Shvartsman has known Gorokhov’s family from as far back as 1962, when Dmitry’s mother worked as an art critic. Gorokhov often designed and authored the advertisements. When he is twenty, Dmitry writes to Shvartsman, asking to become his student. He joins the hieratic school and becomes the artist’s godson in 1977.

1980

Declines the offer of Peter Ludwig to contribute to a group exhibition at the Cologne Kunsthalle. In the 1970s and 1980s, associates with representatives of Conceptualism and Sots Art. Formulates his attitude towards these movements, explaining his unwillingness to contribute to the exhibitions of the period: “They are conceptually unsound, inventors and combiners, self-strokers and self-effaced, innovators. These two fraternities, hoping (seriously) to vindicate themselves through the end of the world, even providing the end. Their activities are based on hope for ‘ratio’, intellectualism, hopelessness and degeneracy sanctioned by the world, even provoking the end. Their activities are based on hope for ‘ratio’, intellectualism, hopelessness and degeneracy sanctioned by the world, even provoking the end. Their activities are based on hope for…’

1982

Moves with his family from their communal apartment to a separate flat on Veshnyakov Street. Receives a samizdat copy of Ilya Kabakov’s article “The Sinners,” in which the author, despite long years of friendship since the 1960s, is highly disparaging of Shvartsman’s artistic abilities. He replies “Dear Ilyusha, your concordant New Year’s present and accurate and honest has finally reached me. I make haste to gladden you. I am sincerely poisoned – only not by what or how you wrote (both the one and the other are thoroughly bad). What poisons me is your meanness and treachery.”

Kabakov’s article is later published in a magazine without the sections personally attacking Shvartsman.

1983

Begins to work with his student Dmitry Gorokhov, who graduates from college and teaches in a school, where he is awarded premises for a studio. Meets the Italian poet and scriptwriter Antonio Guerra, who invites him to Italy, but he is refused an exit visa by the Soviet authorities.

1984

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Invited by Jürgen Harten, director of the Düsseldorf Kunsthalle, to hold an exhibition in West Germany. When Harten asks the Soviet Ministry of Culture for permission to export his works, he is told that there is no such artist in the Soviet Union. When Harten claims that he saw him only yesterday, the Ministry of Culture explains that he is not an official member of the Union of Artists, “but artist number one in terms of export from the Soviet Union” (such is not really the case). Shvartsman never joins the Union of Artists, knowing that it is a club of confederates alien to him. He used to joke: “Better to be the only member of Bosch than a member of the Soviet Union” (such is not really the case).
“When I die, burn the remains. I was happy in love, in the work of my hands, in my children and my friend.”
M. Shvartsman
8th day of August in the year of Our Lord 1987, Moscow, on the night of the seventh and the eighth.

Interviewed on 3 October by the British art historian Matthew Collume Bowen, who takes transparencies for his book on modern Russian art (1987). Visited by representatives of Christie’s, but declines to auction his work. Invited by David Malcom to exhibit in London, but dreams of first holding a one-man show in Russia.

Dmitry Gontovich spends two months abroad. Abandons his studio and works at home, creating a cycle of drawings leading to a new series of hieratures, including Instruction, Doors of the Sky, Form of Time, Catcher and Delight of Insight.

1988
Birth of his granddaughter Alexandra. Begins a new cycle of large-scale hieratures. Although the chalk primed boards are replaced by fibreboard, the artist continues to paint in tempera.

Meets the German art historian Professor Karl Emmernacher and cultural adviser Klaus Schrameyer on 5 January. The French collector Guy Banjadian acquires the painting Triad and two graphic works on 30 January. Exhibition of the Banjadian collection at the Tretyakov Gallery on 5 May and then at the Hermitage Museum in Leningrad (catalogue).

Visited by Jose Alvarez (publisher), a representative of the Galerie de France and Irma Yefimovitch (art historian) on 5 May.

Visited by representatives of Christie’s, but declines to auction. Receives a letter from Dr Franz Sels on 13 November with a contract for a gallery exhibition in Düsseldorf, but declines the offer. On 18 November gives transparencies and photographs to art historian Ekaterina Degot, who is writing a book on artists of the 1970s and 1980s and contemporary Russian painting. The book is published in the United Kingdom.

Dr Thomas Dische (director of the Ukranowa-Museum in Bremen) visits the artist and offers him a one-man show at his museum, but he refuses to contribute more than fifty paintings and fifty works of graphic art to negotiations on 23 May with Lesley Herham (gallery owner) and Edy Naarnro photographic the artist for an album.

1989
Austrian collector Jürgen Frenczelk purchases the Millenky Này hierature.

Met by Lord Camous and Simon de Pury of Sotheby’s. Submits four large works, which are never auctioned.

Albrecht Marlen of Deutsche Bank constantly offers to hold an exhibition alongside Russian icons. The artist declines the offer, fearing that his works will be regarded as new icons.

Meets Valery Dudakov, a leading art historian from Moscow, who attempts to convince him to exhibit at his museum, but refuses to contribute more than fifty paintings and fifty works of graphic art to negotiations on 23 May with Lesley Herham (gallery owner) and Edy Naarnro photographic the artist for an album.

1990
Visited by the Italian ambassador, Giovanni Melillo, and his wife. Visited by Nicola Genni and Paola Logli from Swiss television, who shoot material for an unmade film. Visited by Peter Spilman (director of the Bochum Museum), who attempts to convince him to exhibit at his museum, but refuses to contribute more than fifty paintings and fifty works of graphic art to negotiations on 23 May with Lesley Herham (gallery owner) and Edy Naarnro photographic the artist for an album.

1991
Visited on 2 June by Dr Franz Sels and his daughter Clara Maria (owners of a gallery in Düsseldorf), Pavel Khokhlov (Stoykovskii Baboloeizobraziteli) and his assistant Yooyor Oganev.

1992
Ilya Jokleva (deputy director for academic research) and Olga Yoshikova (curator) invite the artist to hold a one-man show at the Tretyakov Gallery. Although he has an alternative offer from the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, he agrees to exhibit at the Tretyakov Gallery. He is helped by Olga Yoshikova, whom he calls the initiator of his “hierature” expectations. When asked to give names to the exhibited works, to make the paperwork easier, he refuses: “The hierature cannot be verbally named. It is a Sign and, as a Sign, has its own tacit name.” In a compromise decision, he agrees to give the works nominal titles.

1993
Meets Vevi Luxhov (mayor of Moscow), who awards the artist his first ever studio, which he unfortunately never works in.

1994
Major retrospective at the Tretyakov Gallery from 15 March to 20 April, consisting of sixty-eight paintings and forty works of graphic art (catalogue). The exhibition enjoys great public resonance and the artist is referred to as a national asset.

“The first exhibition of the most enigmatic, most inaccessible and probably the most influential artist has opened … A large number of people were present at this historical event” (Koretskii’s Daily, No. 47, 17 March 1994, p. 12).

One-day show at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in honour of the visit of the Israeli head of state.

Donates two paintings – Ricercare and Meta-Portrait – to the Tretyakov Gallery (followed by Moscow, St Petersburg in 2001). The Tretyakov Gallery purchases three paintings – Trinitas, Space, Idea of Place and Hierarchy of Breakthrough – and six works of graphic art (the artist later donates one more). Donates the
painting ‘Tokko’ to the Literary Gazette for a charity auction.

The Galerie Clara Maria Sels in Düsseldorf buys seven paintings and twenty works of graphic art for itself and the Clemens-Sels Museum in Neuss.

Mikhail Shvartsman School (Brand Labels of the Special Bureau of Art and Construction 1966–84) exhibition (catalogue) shows that “Mikhail Shvartsman’s works in applied design are just as unique as his works of fine art” (Kommersant Daily, No. 164, 1 September 1994).

Presents Joyous Herald to Mikhail Shemyakin for helping to publish the catalogue of his one-man show at the Tretyakov Gallery.

Breaks his collarbone and is hospitalised.

1995

German collector Jacob Bar-Gera purchases two paintings – Exit (1972, 100 x 75 cm) and Former Incarnations (1970, 100 x 75 cm).

Mikhail Shemyakin promises to publish a monograph on the artist. He sends Arkady Lvov to photograph all the artist’s works and secure his archive of theoretical writings.

Declines to contribute to an exhibition of art accompanying a festival of music in Lockum in Germany due to a lack of organisation and insurance.

Antonia Gismer shoots a film on Shvartsman directed by Clark Paradjanov.

Breaks his hip and spends two months in hospital.

Gives Mikhail Shemyakin seven fundamental graphic hieratures as an advance for his promised monograph on the artist.

Contributes Dolphin Formula to an exhibition in memory of Kazimir Malevich at the UNESCO International Federation of Artists exhibition rooms in Moscow.

1996

Agrees to hold an exhibition at the prestigious Naschokin House in Moscow after Natalia Rurickova (director) sees his works at his one-man show at the Tretyakov Gallery in 1994.

Norton Dodge acquires the painting Sundew (1972, 100 x 75 cm) for the Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum at Rutgers, State University of New Jersey.

1997

Contributes thirty-four paintings and forty works of graphic art to a one-man show at the Naschokin House in Moscow (catalogue).

“Shvartsman’s creative world and personality are one of the greatest surprises of the artistic life of recent years” (A. Vasinsky, “Greetings from the Year 3835”, Izvestiya, No. 24, 7 February 1997).

Falls ill on 6 November and rapidly deteriorates, despite all the efforts of the doctors and nurses.

DIES AT 9:25 AM ON 18 NOVEMBER 1997

“A leading artist, legendary man and model of fate has passed away...” (Ekaterina Degot, “The First and Only Hierat of Russian Painting”, Looking from St Petersburg, No. 90, January 1998).
Mikhail Shvartsman on his death bed
9:25 am, 18 November 1997

Mikhail Shvartsman’s death mask,
made four hours after his demise, at 2 pm on 18 November 1997
Property of the Russian Museum

Gravestone of Mikhail Shvartsman (1926–1997)
Don Cemetery, Moscow
Photographed in 2003
THE LITERARY HERITAGE OF
MIKHAIL SHVARTSMAN
The book introduces readers to the literary heritage of Mikhail Shvartsman. Only short extracts from this heritage were published in the artist’s lifetime, followed by more excerpts after his death. This new album places these writings in their historical context of meaning. The book publishes the main body of texts written by Mikhail Shvartsman, offering a fascinating insight into the artist’s creative world. They include theoretical constructions, diary-like observations, notes, exhortations, discussions, letters, poems and authorised extracts from interviews. They are intended to help explain the artist’s key ideas, concepts, positions and attitude.

The main material in the biographical section is the notes for Mikhail Shvartsman’s planned book on Hieratism. These entries include a list of possible titles for the book itself and the individual parts, sections and chapters. The list is reproduced here in its entirety:

**THE NOTEBOOKS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1960s</td>
<td>Art will Not Disappear. Deformation and bare construction are, in a certain sense, similar. Organic transformation is the basis of the new art. A synthesis bearing in mind the achievements of the Suprematists and abstractionists and others (from abstraction to the concrete), from divisions towards synthesis, via an understanding of forms, from last significance to new synthetic significance (religious). Synthesis: unity in the battle of the Suprematist with the plastic, revealed as the subconscious ↔ conscious ↔ overconscious. The whole: an unbeliefable image (sign, code), not foreseen, not conceived, realisable in labour, in movement towards the ending of a picture, in spontaneous impulses. The voice of painting, the disappearing of self. No No No. Enormous significance is once again attached to the transcendental, irrepressible (significance) received in the “overconscious ↔ conscious” process. In the age of fear at the worldwide agony. The highest collectiveness of moral forces in a rational calculation of the preceding divisions ↔ spontaneous overcoming of all E I + naked signficance (post-abstraction, individual, spontaneous, transcendental, in the volitional process) in labour (the search for a higher significance), a sign not realised by the sharpness of the process of the epoch of analytical divisions (Malevich, Kandinsky, Mondrian and others). The post-abstractional process of synthesis, the morally significant tension of the all ↔ self-expression. The end to the pieties of the (even deformal) personhood is what is introduced into the picture, the indiscernible consciousness of the picture (the course of pre-abstraction work, false and sluggish), outside the unforeseen (and consequently higher) &quot;overconscious ↔ conscious&quot;. Nothing should be introduced into the canvas (picture), everything has to be obtained from the canvas. Only this can bring out the unique world of the individual and thus enrich the world. Here is meekness. Deformation is fracture, fabrication, falsehood, illustration and empty chatter. Transformation (for, without the unification, the appearance of deformation), found in the spontaneous quest for links inside the picture (subconsciously), in turn realisable and realised, and arising organic, organic, that is the modern task. The “economy of energy” (for me) is not topical, on the contrary. This was good for the epoch of divisions (Malevich and others). 1965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>I relinquish the field of hostility to anyone desiring victories on this field: I have no time for enmity – I am too busy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>Demonic forces, tempests and cataclysms are tamed by the sun – the festival of light. God is the highest clarity. To create a festival implies disciplining in God. That is the basis of my cause in life. 9 November 1969</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The signs of elevation are hieratures, the secret is in them. The signs of churches (their noumenal designation) are meta-texture. From the inside and on the outside, from far and near, enormous outside you, intimate inside you – the light saturated and light-resonant lightness of the Creation (creation – the Creation – ending mark) and this outside you, intimate inside you – the light-saturated and light-resonant light (the Judgement of God) is always with me. This sorrowful diversity, this sorrowful void of Muscovite quantitation with everything technical and standing on an equal par with the grand styles of grand architecture. The principles of the birth of the forms of this new architectural style are designated prophetically by the acts of the hieratures.

The horizon overturned. The mountains formed the font of John the Baptist. The great carnival of pain, pride and death. The high passion grief of the stars. The death of joy. Beyond the veil of the rain. The door to the beyond.

The engendered sign is illuminated through the pledge of sign-birth. The Suprematist idea is valuable as an idea. This idea is, in sections, unforeseen (excluding the tranquil signs of analysis). The nature of hieratic, besides all our definitions once given, the hieratic – hieratic structure is, first and foremost, a sign situating, concentrating inside itself the emotional, the over-personal, a personal emotional self-manifestation and a personal emotional self-manifestation in sign, constructive and inexorably Suprematist (in the positional and terminological meaning of the word) forms. Supremus is the Latin for mystical experience and a personal emotional self-manifestation in sign.

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called “not of this world” – sacrosanctamenos links and sacrosan-
czentamenos heroes. The highest hierarchy of defamiliarisation is the co-
currence of death. This is the lower hierarchic step of the hieratic structures, for
when, making art on an iconic co-
currence emblematically concentra-
cing the spiritual meaning of his past life. For the heart, in any case, the death of a man is the creation of an
icon of himself. It is not a face any more, but a countenance, i.e. an
strangeness via an image “not of this world” to the countenance of
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Italians, Roman Gaul, medieval plastic art and the highest specimens
of defamiliarisation, live in the sensual sphere and can be observed
versazione heroes.

It nails the soul to the body, strengthens it and makes it like a body, so
forced, as a result of which it feels this and regards as the most evident
worse than a stone.

If you try to escape suffering, the Lord will not give you this. You
should not attempt to escape the torment of the cross! You will only
get something much worse. The anguish of the soul will never
escape the pain from hitting the ground. If any one of my students does
not understand this, then he has not learnt anything. Do not get carried
away with victories. Are you sure they are not defeat?

The trace of pain

shambhala

The trace of pain. A petty thief says: “When they take a thing of much, that is not steal-
ing, but condemnation.” A brief thief says: “It has always been so, in nature," as he can
then, this, albeit with difficulty) consider his own. "I will steal for myself.
[...]

To the heart. Oh Pig! Oh, thinking stone!

Only what is perceived as always being a organic and fruitful. Yes!
We find the tokens of the hieratic with the Egyptians, in old icons and even in
even in beets, but try to be able to find (mediate-relate), enliven
the sign of the Spirit, find the hieratic sphere, not through science (its
tes for this), but through a real mystic experience. Develop,
spatially, a method of things and so on, and so on, and so on. God
has always been in the everything! Just the present case is
what was always not of this world” will still exist.

But the highest hierarchies of defamiliarisation in the compositional
sense are manifest outside the mono-sale-scene. For example: the early
Italians, Roman Gaul, medieval plastic art and the highest specimens
of folk creativity.

The chain of hierarchies of defamiliarisation arises from simple
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folk creativity.
of hierarchic topography, their meditative reading with superimposition on one another and the downfall of transfigurations — and so on until the full manifestation of a rich and clear hieratic metamorphosis — the sign of the Spirit (hierature, meta-tecture). Whom shall I tell Lord!

** Inspiration. **

A theological hieroglyphic situation is a aimed hierature (with the attribute of self-canonsation) founded (this time) by pre-prepared pre-prepared metahistoric bodies, with an unforeseen aim.

Pre-hieratic phantasmagorias
1. Philosophical [?]
2. Theological
3. In the trace of a vision

“...The truth points to itself and to the false” (D’Gaza) ...

I do not feel the slightest urge to make geometric, stereometric, perspective and spatial focuses. No. My hieratures, meta-textures and other holy signs, i.e. hieratic situations of irrational worlds, express the noumenal essence of architecture. Like the countenances of the spiritual hierarchies, they arise spontaneously, unforeseen, and represent a spiritual shelter, a light-bearing House of Higher Life – a tectonic image. These signs are a silent psalm, like all hiera-structures are hieratic bodies, with an unforeseen aim.

Pre-hieratic phenomena
1. Philosophical [?]
2. Theological
3. In the trace of a vision

“Weep, summoned one!”

You experience the sensation of striking a ray – like flooding joy. Swallow it down, summoned one!

Where is the criterion of completion, of the appraisal of work, of the fullness of expression?

Here you are. Agnus Dei, there comes a sweet likeness of death, concurrence with something extra-sensual, extra-everyday, extra-expressive, extra-real. When you perceive the spiritual, the inexplicable, as reality (you live in it in the ray), clearly and really permeated by unity with the Higher. Here is the happy sign of completion – grace.

Everything here is honest. Delight crowns the deed. He who has experienced this at least once has received the criterion and will always follow it. And then the beautiful will be the genuine fruit of the testimony of the Holy Spirit, and not the result of merely professional burdens and their criteria – these, seemingly convincing suspensions of willful efforts and ambitious industry. Master, come to the festival!

Self-manifestation: manifestation of the Holy Spirit (spirit-expression). How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts (Psalia 84) Pre-hieratic accumulation is defamiliarisation.

Manifest the romantic consciousness. Overcoming defamiliarisation. Reading in signs. Noumen.

The very concept, developed in all aspects and their multitude. The form is developed and expressed.

The fruits are designated: Formulated practically by pictures. The prophetic lines are formulated. The search method is developed. The method of hieratic topography is developed: Hieratic imagination. Pre-hieratic accumulation: defamiliarisation. Defamiliarisation of registers – accumulation. Hieratic pedagogy.

It is necessary to cast aside all self-arrangement. Do not turn your work into the applied, assisting something (!). Serve beauty, pray through your deeds, remember that world-creation continues and you are a participant in the mystery of eternity. Beauty serves, whereas chatterboxes and manufacturers of “truth” tamper creation. The execution of vanity.

1970s

On defamiliarisation

The metaphor of death – transformation – “Grand form”.

The image of death is the last step – an icon of the life of man, a pre-hieratic structure — defamiliarisation. This is the last utmost expression in the form of a still sensual world, the lower hieratic (in the pheno-

menal world) trace of the Spirit. Defamiliarisation is the first testimony of the Spirit.
Towards death – creative exchatology – the start of the resurrection. Recapitulation with the vanishing nature of "progress" is only possible in hope in resurrection, otherwise life does not have any sense. Technical progress turns man into an object, into an anonym. History is coming to an end.

The hieratic image is a congregational-inferable image (even if it is fabricated by one single personality, for it is hierarchic in artificing and hierarchic of the stages of manifestation) in the empires of the dead, since its (the hieratic image) manifestation follows the lines of the dying out of the hierarchic structures of deformation and enrichment by them or rearing from them, as well as by the work of the resurrecting memory – transformation of the eternal, the pathetic dialectics of movement through the layers of culture, after tokens left to ourselves in past incarnations.

The hieratic sign, therefore, an image manifested in a congregational channel, as both the modern and the old master are on one line here.

All forms proceeding from the mind, combinative, sur-form and expressive are deformative, indelible, false and temporary – not Spirit-manufactured or transforming the eternal. Transformation into the eternal is heritic metamorphosis. It is manifested in unforeseen and spontaneous forms, in the forms of transformation:


We write with the hieratic I unwind the thread of the ancient memory immersed in the flesh. Hierotaxis is the process of salvation (one all), the deiconization of honey (and honey is the sublimation of florescence).

Dissatisfied with the writings and conclusions of contemporaries on painting, I put aside my brush for a day (God will, I think, forgive me) to utter a WORD ABOUT THE CAUSE OF MY LIFE.

Christian painting split into two streams: one is Byzantine – sublime (spiritual, hieratic) – Palestine, Byzantium, Cappadocia, East Slavs, Roum. The other is Latin – sensual, corporal, analytical (Italy and the whole of Europe).

Both were initially healthy: the first with sincere faith, solemnness, congregationalism (constructivism) and monumentalism. The second with popular sensual directness, faith, the deinstitutionalization of images and scale.

Both were enticed.

First Latin (by the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries) – by exaltations, hier., Man-God analysis, removing the directness and ambition of the great masters, i.e. the Renaissance of Hellenism.

The first was then enticed by the second.

The Testimony of the Spirit was thus tragically expended. By the seventeenth century, both lines were enclosed in common delight. A dazzling array of painters-sportmen, manufacturers of museum effects, was formed by the hypocrisy of the worldly and by the civilizing missionary of scholarly sectarians of culture reproduced by the recipes of academic dressing. With false criteria, they coated and professed everywhere the testimonies of the spirit, the acknowledged and initiated prophets of the good sense of color directness.

The Byzantine and Latin lines enclosed, the first enticed by the second. A snake biting its own tail. Impulse (Testimony of the Spirit) frozen in a closed circle, in a sensual circle of artful mis-en-scénées of theatricalised or spied life, frequently breaking through with the directness of individual creators.

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The phenomenon is not separate from the noumenon. The phenomenon is dead without the noumenon. Do not make in goodness into the darkness. Do not believe the hysterics of the dead among the living, but to be revealed to the living – tokens suppress the spiritual testimony of the master. Will give you humility, beneficent concentratedness and vastness, for the master is included here only by feasible participation within the Aleph-sphere. The transcendental meaning of these symbols and their links (sign-links) in the mystery of the world (the composition in hieratism is sign-links). The transformation and destruction of these signs (meta-physical) set in motion the generative process of the birth of hierat – the process of hieratosis. The result of the process of hieratosis (my term) is the recognition of the emblematic habitation – the sign is recognised and the process is complete. The preceding processes, the stages of the sacrificial metamorphosis, are brutal, inevitable and perceptible, like the changing of the generations. The hierat is a signifying, unpronounceable name – a silent name. The thread of eternity is immured in the flesh. The hieratic means the cosmic. The hierature is a cosmic name – I – a cosmist. The cosmic consciousness exists and grows. The cosmic consciousness exists and grows. The hieratonics – the hiera-fund – the fore-language of the third millennium. Any excitement of the eye to feel an object as a whole or its detail without as a contradiction. The verbality is the life and position of the verbalisers (!). My term. Any spontaneously arising sign has the right of existence … and does not become a sacrifice, if there are no new metamorphoses. It (the sign) will assert itself, if it is recognised. The recognition of the emblematic pledge (meta-task) is the natural limit of things.

Any mark on a drawing is the running of a familiar thought. Any emblematic sphere is a stream of symbiosis coming at you (and us). This is a sphere of prophecies which, willingly or unwillingly, we form and which will be read by the cosmic consciousness of the future. The cosmic consciousness exists and grows. The transcendent meaning of these symbols and their links (sign-links) in the mystery of the world (the composition in hieratism is sign-links). The transformation and destruction of these signs (metaphysical) set in motion the generative process of the birth of hierat – the process of hieratosis. The result of the process of hieratosis (my term) is the recognition of the emblematic habitation – the sign is recognised and the process is complete. The preceding processes, the stages of the sacrificial metamorphosis, are brutal, inevitable and perceptible, like the changing of the generations.

The hierat completes a meeting of emblematic links, their deeply contradictory existence implying the life of the soul (souls) and the passing of “I” in historical time, the strata of cultures. Today, now, the hierat unaccountably seeks the meta-task of his “I” in these strata. This process is the hieratosis of the birth of hierat.

The hierat completes.

The hierat opens.

The hierat begins.

1. The hierat’s silence, combines – quiet, those born with the quiet of the pre-born, and creates the sign of quiet.

2. The hierat creates a bridge uniting us and our lives with the life beyond death. So that those who are summoned to go can freely go there and back. That is true reality (signified sign reality).

We rise with you and leave the sunset to ourselves in a divided silence – a divided silence.

Oh! Sunset! It is fought with the sunrise if you are a light if you are a luminous dedicated – shine.

The hierat, he through whom the cosmic (ecumenical) sign-stream passes.

The mystical location of the objects of life is divided into layers in the hierature. Through vision, the soul reads a multitude of its states – positions in a multitude of cycles in its pre-birth, even now. The presence of “I” is simultaneously on all levels. It lives inside the object, like the object, alongside the object, enclosing its cast, over it, in its environs – from all sides. All this is concentrated in emblematic links through a multitude of metaphysically forming spatial positions – self-dividing, calligraphic, counterpointing, self-deforming, giving the evasive illusion of enfainting, even of objectification. Space – is directly perspective, space is calligraphic, spherical, reversibly perspective, it is counterpointing in the hierature. The hieratic seems to want to objectify itself. This is one of the hieratic paradoxes (illusorised by an object). This is the paradoxical aspect of hieratics, i.e. the hieratic paradox – its essential attribute is perceived from without as a contradiction.

Self-spreadng space. Self-seducing space. Any excitement of the eye to feel an object as a whole or its detail is instantaneously related by the essences of the construction of the whole. Everything in the hierature is in an harmonic, even concentric whole, but everything is contradiction, anything slips away, everything is indefinite, everything metamorphoses.

The essence of the hierate in its emblematic links; this is its composition, its language is cosmic. The hierat is a monad. Any naming (verbal naming) of the hierat is merely a tribute to the common emotional “ordering”, that is, the conclusion of “storing” and crowning with a "name tag”. There is no genuine, i.e. mystical, requirement for this. It is a lot of the cipher and deciphering of hieratons, in much as this is possible. Hieratons are hieratonic and hierarchic. Hieratons are strictly hierarchic. Hierato is a technical, architectural and architectural and architectural. The hierat, its structure, is not the verbal language of the future. This language is concentrated and compact = sacred Calligraphy – position sheet No. … Non-verbal = verbal.

The verbality is the life and position of the verbalisers (!). My term.

"Avant-garde" is an idea. It is vacuous and the desire for advantages. With this shriek, metaphysics forces itself into rank. Not the "avant-garde", but the organic sprouting of living branches on the tree of Eternal Life – that is the meaning of creativity.

Muscovite gentlemen and other assorted avant-gardists, do not style yourselves, do not impose yourselves, do not be arrogant, do not be a bad job. And you, “Comrades”, fullers of ideological commissions, do not think that you are alive merely because you are paid – you are dead.

Malevich thought and said that it was necessary to break. He hoped to build the new on a cleared place. This will not be the "new",
The acts of the hieratures.

The change of metamorphoses in hieratics is an inevitable process. It happens, I would say, with inevitable brutality, like the changing of the generations and times. Not that, by the way, is not something that is going on. It is not to be interpreted, not to be explained with books, not to see in the eyes of men, not even to be told.

I call my works slyly eclectus. My thing is hierarchy. I am an heir - the term came to me in a vision. I am an heir, through whom the universal stream of signs passes. I signify a silent name - the Sign of the Spirit of the Lord. Through the meeting of a myriad of signs and the sacrificial changing of emblematic metamorphoses, I form the hierarchy.

The mystical method of man is architectonically compressed in the hierarchy. The hierarchy is born ecstatically. The signs of the mystical experience are displayed by the popular consciousness, fore-memory, in the hierature.

No one has lifted or is lifting the electedness of the Jews. Electedness is a sign of the name of the spiritual essence in signs. That is why the emblematic interpretation of these metamorphoses is so important to the heir. The theurgic result of this interpretation, for whose sake development, labour, worklessness, silent patience, is spontaneously removed in this process? No! On the contrary, it is activated to a level of remarkable freedom.

I choose from the point of view of reasons and for, while he himself is his own reason, for he is created in the image of God. Creativity, creativity - heaven has man's likeness to the God. Creation, creativity - i.e. co-creation with God - that's man's likeness to God. That is why it is said: "By their deeds shall ye know them. A deed for the cause of God replaces one of the Gods (God's)."

I understand the master, like weeping after a zielik, cutting off your inutility, defamiliarisation with the grandeur of a deliberate monograph. The birth occurs at this crossroad, here the student becomes a master, incites things and crystallises the ability to detect the essences given from on high. What if, in the behest of the master's hand, let him be humble! Do not be arrogant in service. Do not proudly consider your own work to have been made in the sphere of the mystical habitat of a master called by God for the testimony of God and crystallising this talent. Use vigilant meekness to butter up artistic vain-glorious arrogance, else you will expect yourself from the sphere of the mystical task of the master through whom you receive initiation (there have been and are examples). The vain-glorious even thinks that he is departing himself, yet when he remains alone, existence shows how fruitful, weak and helpless he is. And if you bear your ordination to the end, you will learn the Will of God, whether or not you have been called to the Holy Crown.

If you are not called, battle yourself and remain in your own hierarchy, meekly serving the cause. Know that not you yourself select your hierarchy. God places you. And how will you know? You will know through time and inside yourself, by the Deed and by the Word, of the master (calling you), for it is said -

Student, learn the master's voice, take the commandments of your master and crystallise this talent.

The artist addresses everyone, pronouncing (summoning) names by form, so that they are recognised and through them (the names) distinguished the spirit-bearing of names and loved them. One of the tasks of hieratics (maybe the most important one, perhaps the only one).

It is said about us in the Gospel, those who do on the field of Creation, creativity - i.e. co-creation with God - that is man's likeness to God. We discourse on man from the point of view of reasons and for, while he himself is his own reason, for he is created in the image of God. Creativity, creativity - heaven has man's likeness to the God. Creation, creativity - i.e. co-creation with God - that's man's likeness to God. That is why it is said: "By their deeds shall ye know them. A deed for the cause of God replaces one of the Gods (God's)."

No to you, gentlemen! Passion-love requires responsibility and strength of the spirit. And you want to sit on the fence and, "in the event of something." to chat your way out of it (without traces) even from future generations. Gentlemen, culture is not made without spilling blood.

Creation is an emerckned, heated prayer. Christ prayed until the blood poured like sweat. No, to you, gentlemen! Passion-love requires responsibility and strength of the spirit. And you want to sit on the fence and, "in the event of something." to chat your way out of it (without traces) even from future generations. Gentlemen, culture is not made without spilling blood. Culture is an emerckned, heated prayer. Christ prayed until the blood poured like sweat. No, to you, gentlemen! Passion-love requires responsibility and strength of the spirit. And you want to sit on the fence and, "in the event of something." to chat your way out of it (without traces) even from future generations. Gentlemen, culture is not made without spilling blood. Culture is an emerckned, heated prayer. Christ prayed until the blood poured like sweat. No, to you, gentlemen! Passion-love requires responsibility and strength of the spirit. And you want to sit on the fence and, "in the event of something." to chat your way out of it (without traces) even from future generations. Gentlemen, culture is not made without spilling blood. Culture is an emerckned, heated prayer. Christ prayed until the blood poured like sweat. No, to you, gentlemen! Passion-love requires responsibility and strength of the spirit. And you want to sit on the fence and, "in the event of something." to chat your way out of it (without traces) even from future generations. Gentlemen, culture is not made without spilling blood. Creation is an emerckned, heated prayer. Christ prayed until the blood poured like sweat.

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At a discussion

Therefore, gentlemen! Do not be afraid to commit a gaffe or somehow slip up. If you cannot swim, at least flounder, speak out sincerely, unafraid of insults. Those generations of Maleviches were not cowards. The following genius, Vasya, does not “assiduously destroy” the preceding. No. He changes his view, perhaps, approach, material and other things and continues to create. He creates in the likeness of God and like God. That is why it is said in the Testament: “I came not to destroy, but to fulfil.” This image is given in edification. And so it is, questioners of this world.

The energy of birth is the energy of resurrection. The hieratic is the energy of resurrection.

Oh! Beauty is not subject to reason and even, oh paradox! does not conform to reason, for reason does not save. Beauty is subject to the Holy Spirit. Beauty is both the result and the channel of Spirit-manifestation.

The fear of breaking one’s willingness of wills, before a new clear call of the Lord, prevents me from continuing the canvas. This call and voice of his “I” always listens with the trepidation of recognition. “We reject Reason or recognise it, we instrumentise reason.” Man is now being led away from the right, chosen by him, of the old, accepted, cosy decadence towards high forms and, enriching materially, is no longer satisfied with simple functionality (in architecture, for example). This process is like comprehending the mystic via the understandable (develop this). A master appears. The right to democratic art is a spent lie.


An heir by the grace of God.

The sign of the manifestation of the spirit is beauty. Beauty saves – the sign of Hope – the sign E., the sign of victory E. The token of victories over the forces of Evil.

This is genuine, veritable reality, its essence is called a silent name – the Sign of the Name, an hieratic sign. The new (current) hieratic impulse of naming, still unfamiliar to theologians and not adapted by them, the innermost experience of naming.

An example of hieratic permissiveness can be a built-up natural piece of earth with allowance for natural relief: with waters, ravines, forests – Everything in the intersection of (forming) metamorphoses

Occasionally, they think essentially, more frequently, nostalgically – even more frequently, they do not think at all, and this is salutary, though awful. The madness of mistrustfulness: Death gnaws the heart the happiest hours of the night.

Mikhail Shvartsman

1980s

1990s


Written in the margins of the text in Mikhail Shvartsman’s handwriting: “For my book on Hieratism.”

“Dictated to Alexander Shumilin by Mikhail Shvartsman. Preceded by a later entry (December 1973) in Mikhail Shvartsman’s handwriting: “Dictated to the perfidious lackey A. S. Shumilin, whose calculating servility was triply atoned by evil, piracy and boorishness – that is the face of the rabble and it serves me right: don’t cast your pearls before swine. ‘Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?’ (Christ’s question).”

Alexander Shumilin was a student of Mikhail Shvartsman and worked for him at the Special Bureau of Art and Construction.

Mikhail Shvartsman

1990
The correspondence

Letter to Zhdanov
Reflective rough draft of a reply to the notice
written by the Czech artist
for an exhibition.

M. Shvartsman, September 1972, Moscow

To Zhdanov (to his nominee)

As you ask me to state my opinion, I will allow myself to do so in an honest and impartial form.

1. A set of associations instead of judgement.
2. Shortness and a lack of time and place are no excuse for in- accuracy, indiscipline and superficiality, evasion of responsibility and displeasure. The lack of place in your article given to me is only compensated by the exerted and penetrating shortness. Although desire- able, you have none. Penetrating shortness: I give it to you to manifest.

That is what is scientifically correct — unlike your set of associations in place of judgement.

3. My judgement on European critical thought (as something ex- tremely circumstantial) might be old-fashioned, but is very necessary to me (for I am busy with matters). Many Europeans coming here to Russia, however, evoke an aggregating revolt with their emptiness, superficiality and cheap third for negative exaggerations, at which dullards suffer themselves. Our “Slavonic bazaar” has been newly established on former Nikolskaya Street, now 25 October Street (25 October Street — how un-Russian that sounds!). But if the “Slavonic bazaar” is good even on a renamed site, I do not go there. Do not hold a “Slavonic bazaar” on the basis of your impressions of modern isography.

4. I do not judge the artistic practice is essentially incorrect, be- cause it cannot be built on the experience of Western art practice. These are two different ways of an (or rather) spiritual structure of thinking, rather than the vertical with the sweet and what you (weevy) call “traditionalism”, i.e. congregational spiritual work, is the testimony of the Holy Spirit, but the European tendency for destruction (self-destruction) can today be called traditionalism.

Letter to Zhdanov
Fifth version

Dear Mr. Shvartsman,

Yesterday I received a translation of the passage in your article in which, through comparison and historical-cultural associations, you characterise my work.

Despite the fact that during our conversation you so salutarily de- fined me not as a painter, but an icon, you have pinned an image in which I can hardly recognise myself.

1. I am deeply alien to “traditionalism”, which is, today, only self- destruction: I have never produced “relief stylisations”, for the course of my fate has inevitably taken me away from them into a congregational artistic scope.

2. Always paying my dues to the imaginative power of the Aborig- ines and Negroes, I believe that those individual specimens in which the mind manages to rise up above the subconsciousness and sen- sualism are highly instructive. My aim is the proto-image, i.e. the trace of the Spirit, and the meditative course sweeds aside external as- sociations. Artists are also typical of the hierographies of my working process.

3. It is not true that I did not want to speak about art at all. On the contrary, I consider it extremely important to repeat Dostoevsky’s words “beauty will save the world.” “Save, Lord, thy people!”

4. Immanent — A summons to spiritual work, the basis of which is testimony of the Holy Spirit.

5. Hieratic sign — The sign of the Spirit — a materialised expression of the spiritual protos-image, spontaneously born by an ast hieratic meditation.

6. Hierography — A summons to spiritual work, the basis of which is testimony of the Holy Spirit.

7. Hierarchic sign — A master, the matter of whose oeuvre is hier- archy, its school and its conception.

8. Immanent — A summons to spiritual work, the basis of which is testimony of the Holy Spirit.

9. Hierography — A summons to spiritual work, the basis of which is testimony of the Holy Spirit.

Dear Mikhail,

I do not compile iconostases — they arise — and this too is fate.

My regards to Tanya; Ira and I hug you and invite you to visit us. Greetings to all!”

M. Shvartsman

Received your letter, thanks. I would like, of course, to head off for the Hereafter, only that when it will be, I do not know.

Dear Mr. Shvartsman,

I read your article on the show of the Lemnagard avant-garde artists. How well you’ve covered the topic, and cropped someone else’s words. You are a great poet, why do you need it? Not even a parting state- sponsored commission is worth that. This social apologia is dark.

I am not keen on any exhibitions because the goal is a tragedy and deserves to be treated as such in part, with knowledge of the subject. In my opinion, incident- ally, everything is all right; I could keep mum, only [no ear, no smart], not privy, was begrudged. Surely this is not obligatory? Kiss — a label

Here is Klee, and Kandinsky has also been slapped on, even Mo- levitchev too [even though your humble servant is nevertheless constructive]. Indeed, in icons [for example] the so-called “Suprematist moment” is only part of things, what does Malevitch come in (did you perhaps outdo the one standing nearby?)? You cannot, of course, muffe up every mouth, but, treating our relations and my love for you, I have decided to ask, for the sake of Shemyakin, to clear me out of there. It is better to sink anonymously among the commercial iconic hills and the commercial assemblages of Moscow.

Take care, Vitya,

I desperately want to take a look at your new verses and the ones you released in the summer, please send them, and don’t let this letter make you angry.

My regards to Tanya, Ira and I hug you and invite you to visit us. Greetings to all!”

 Yours, M. S.

Letter to Vladimir Yankovsky
19 September 1977, (to V. Yankovsky) (Rayby)

Dear Volodya,

I understand your “passive” delivery of Shemyakin’s request, like speaking actively to a boy aged between three and five:

“Boy, tell me this and only this.

I spoke to you on the telephone, I revealed Thorne’s article, sent to my boy Kobilov, in which Shemyakin is accused of building his own career on the misfortunes of others.

While confounding to a healthy dislike of weighing up priorities on the scales of street fame, I sadly see that it is time to help Shemyakin.

As I told you, I think it is better not to write anything, but since you ask and it is necessary for Shemyakin, then I will explain:

Back in Russia, Shemyakin, delighted by the forms of my concept, attributed, in his own taste, adapted these forms. At the start of his new life in Paris, he continued to operate with these adaptations, col- ling his work “metaphysical synthesis”.

The term “metaphysical synthesis” belongs to Vladimir Ivanov. That is the name of his article, which Shemyakin has now published in his Apollo 77 magazine, five years after arriving in Paris. Ivanov was not “metaphysical” because Shemy- akin did not write anything on this question, while the article written by Vladek Ivanov’s is not a concept, but only a declaration, which devoutly extracts a series of familiar anthroposophical tenets.

The positions and methodology of my concept cannot be declari- ngly espoused or called “metaphysical synthesis”. It is clear from the catalogues of Shemyakin’s works that he is gradually overcoming the previous attributions and his current forms possibly correspond to his notions of “metaphysical synthesis”.

If M. Shvartsman is portrayed as someone unfortunate or, worse, robbed, then I relish this.

M. Shvartsman

Letter to Dmitry Babushkin
[1977]

Dear Dmitry,

It is no calamity, really no “calamity”, that you have decided that I do not like the first part of the “meditations”. What is important is that I really felt you were “on the verge of understanding”. I therefore allowed myself two serious words, albeit hastily and in the hussle between daytime and nighttime studies.

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I am not against and neither am I for bombastic (lexic). The [only] thing needed is to rebuild bombasticness: Testimony of the Holy Spirit itself gives birth to high metaphors. Transformation in a testimonial act also transforms the fabric. In the act of the testamen, the creators of the testament, the successors to the Great News, were not written in a "Platonistic style" as such or [incorrect] artisticness. There was no option – they were free. This spirit enkindled by high beauty; the phenomenon of the sign of the Spirit is inexpressibly fine and therefore high, high and therefore fine. It does not initiate a take-off, for it is before the bombastic. As for before the "mediaetina", they are truly not guilty of anything. My answer can be read (this time too) in the business of things. I am simply against the commonplace, non-normative mutual-loans of Petersburg. These loans are only literary and mere verbiage. I am not for notebook lexicon preparad in an actual, comprehended self-commission: He who is called – who has no choice – is free. I do not impose upon innocent words and, much as I regret it, do not really believe that you have understood me this way – if only because we desperately lacked the time.

Eschatology is now no less than the Bible, a fantastic monster, false are the logical guises and lexical and lectures of Party general secretaries-wettaries, little hope for choice. And there is hope – attempt is by us – we live on a radioactive background – what’s the hurry – just love.

Dwight Dand’s love… (and bubbles on it, mother of mine) It was nice to receive your short letter; I am sorry for delaying my reply: no time, please excuse me – written straight out (that is, alas, in draft-form). May Christ be with you, dear Mitya, it is hard for you and your father. When you look, everything is a wedge. Either you won’t go off on paralellism, either you cannot straight out a warp. It is sin and that is all.

May Christ be with you!

Greetings from Irina, Yury, M. Silvartman.

F.S. Even better, come for a visit.

Letter to Igor Zhestkov-Epstein

[Answer to Igor Zhetcok 12/XII – 82, Moscow]²⁷

There is no smallest trace of the genetic experience of a mystery in what you write to me. There is not even the trace of a personal mystical experience. It is simply soft – vain even – civil, empty words about “white slipper.” I can say that even if the colour is changed, I relate to them exactly the same and you are completely right.

Regarding your so-called pleroma, I care, from my side, to absolutely anything that it greatly reminds me of a passed sheet, which might have been taking out onto the balcony for airing, without forgetting to squeeze it, so it is not blown away by the wind, or the winds which are launched so successfully.

Incidentally, I was absolutely everything that you write, notwithstanding your rough understanding of what was encompassed. All these maps remind me of the maps for the drainage of forgetting to squeeze it, so it is not blown away by the wind, or the winds which are launched so successfully.

As for concerns (speaking about students) heavy leprechauns opposition, then this is van futility desiring to justify itself – the quest for rocket fuel for alienation, only the fuel has clearly still not been discovered, for only the ballot box is pulled, one could not do without “section” sign, that is not, inverted commas do not object to the sign, nor does the sign object to the inverted commas, but in gradually metamorphia. Kabakov is an epistle of interment. He is a singer of essence of death, as eternal renewal, as the sign of a new life, i.e. depression living inside him. This is the sign of interment instead of the existence he will express the time and himself and thus soothe the impossibility of something else, namely: if something “new” has not been invented, something definitely previously unexisting and, finally, something not turned upside down, unrefined, etc. All this could be rightfully called “old hat”, ridiculed, worthy of courage, and any hallucination of clowns, clumpsat and the ham-fisted after social tragedy, the demonic joy of depending on the level of a “rag”, to chomp themselves a road through the social pomand. Cook, little pot, cook!

The intellect now creates an extra-ecological order of things, destroying the organs of natural existence, virtually in every sphere, as well as in what we call art.

But what is designated in the process of history, in the process of human existence as a phenomenon of painting, has its own paths and essences, its own tasks, its own paradoxical metamorphoses. Modernism always believed, even worked out, a certain obligation, a certain impossibility of something else, namely: if something “new” has not been invented, something definitely previously unexisting and, finally, something not turned upside down, unrefined, etc. All this could be rightfully called “old hat”, ridiculed, worthy of courage, and any hallucination of clowns, clumpsat and the ham-fisted after social tragedy. The demonic joy of depending on the level of a “rag”, to chomp themselves a road through the social pomand. Cook, little pot, cook!

This does not by any means imply that it is necessary to encourage epigonies obligingly seeking social and philistine engagement and pronouncing “What can I do for you?" Even now they style themselves after the avant-garde, dressing their "nothing" in annihilating laughter. Painting is a matter for the initiated. (Highlight in a separate series those working in "applied". The work of epigonies is not for us.) The wind, the end, the avant-garde" imitation. Let there be sacrificial creation out of the hierarchy of masters and a sincere metamorphosis out of the birth of signs of the spiritual! Gabo (Pevsner) told how, knowing "seeing" the stoppage (the end of Suprematism), Malevich had said: "An image is required."

Kabakov²⁸ hopes that with his (anthropomorphic) annihilation of existence he will express the time and himself and thus soothe the depression living inside him. This is the sign of interim instead of the essence of death, as eternal renewal, as the sign of a new life, i.e. metamorphosis. Kabakov is an epistle of interim. He is a singer of the dust whipped up by the wind. Lulling dust is sweet to him – dust lulling the madness of the cruelty of the world – relaying questions. The world frightens Kabakov, Kabakov is tortured by fears, there is no faith, hope or love in his world. Everyone dancing around him, all the so-called Conceptualists, all this relaying intellectual “brotherhood” is the copulation of the blind in nettles. Kabakov only tempts those who are powerless. They follow him in the hope of easy realization. They are allured by self-illusion – realization without initiation. Those who applauded them win over the joys of understanding appearing. An unprecedented entrance without initiation, so to say. This ele-
ates them in their own eyes: I’ll say, it turns out that everything is so simple. The madness of the credibility of the world is substituted by the derisory belief of intellectual gymnastics. That is all that is needed. The common “joy” of jeering.

Letter to Vitaly Krivulin
To Vitaly Krivulin for his epistolary host
1986
Dear Vitaly,
I even bless our unembellished wilderness. It is only hard in our youth. Yet what concentration is possible!
Your verses are great, only not everything. Epistolatics hold a vigil in some places: everything is somewhere in revenge for someone else, or a reply to something: everything is somewhat acemic.
I dream of an independent form – like in the Bible – widely and wholly. In Chalupcey’s text at least, someone was the best, only what is the measure? No culture – no criterion. Who will the “adaptants” touch?
I agree with almost everything in your letter (most of it, that is). Regarding Leonardo, though, I am forced to disagree. While loving him with all my heart, I am forced to note the difference in our aims. He (his words) wanted to leave the transient to Eternity. I leave the signs of Eternity to the transient. That is why the difference in aims differs the form in the drawings. So what sort of “manner” can there be here? But showing clarity can unite, by directing. If you want or can accept it: I move not by concept, but by revelation, although I stand on it seriously – everything irrational (analysis has shown) lies in a rational form, while the process is volurious – spontaneous, the result is immediately lit up by recognition. Accept my wishes for a happy new year.
Mikhail Shvartsman

I nevertheless relate well to young people. Ours are boral [this is the American influence] or cynical [this is a Russian property], it is sickening, but what can you do? There are, nevertheless, some good kids. I have met them.

Letter to Vitaly Krivulin
Letter to Vitaly Krivulin

We have, thank God, no news at all; I am only doubting there was an exhibition here of “15 Jewish artists”. Everything is very nice, even People not devoid of abilities. One thing is incomprehensible: where does this apartment-reproduction Jewish-settlement nostalgics with little Chopin come from? What does the late-ethnic error of a persecuted Jew give? All this is nothing more than an episode, moreover a late one. Even, if you seek images, even on the lines of persecutions, even then the phenomenal role is more powerful and unbelievable. Who needs chewed-up probabilities? A genuine Jew – a Testament figure – Elijah, Isaiah, David, Judas, Mary, Paul, John. In short, he on whom the word of the Lord is written.
It is if it is not, if the high-spirited callowing of the Israelite is replaced by an ethnic concept, then it is more correct to designate it by the honouring, folkloric word “Yid.”
A Jew is not a geo- or an ethnographic, and not even a national concept; it is a religious concept. The Jew is a calling. Here is the genuine and highest type of Jew Abraham, Moses, Chist.
In my opinion, the Pope is also a Jew, if he is a believer. That is why I cannot accept Frayed and Jewish-settlement smiling-tearful stylisations. This was natural for Chopin. The icon is a fore-born of the Spirit of the Testament. I do not want to say that this list stylises after the icon, but I do say, as an example of a high form, that there are other examples.
I am dying to take a look at your new verses. Greetings to Tanya.
Yours, M. Shv. Ira and I hug you.

*The heading was written in Mikhail Shvartsman’s handwriting on the back of the rough draft. The reason for the letter was the short diary entry of Jindrich Chalupecky, a Czech art historian who visited the artist on 22 June 1972, after meeting Victor Kalinin

**The madness of the credibility of the world is substituted by the derisory belief of intellectual gymnastics. That is all that is needed. The common “joy” of jeering.**

He Created
1973
Cat. 475

**Mikhail Shvartsman** (1926–2001) was a Russian writer, poet, and art historian. He is known for his contributions to the field of Russian avant-garde art and for his critical essays on the work of artists such as Kazimir Malevich and Wassily Kandinsky. Shvartsman was also an important figure in the development of Conceptual art in the Soviet Union. He served as the director of the State Central Museum of Modern Art in Moscow from 1973 until his death in 2001. Shvartsman was a leading figure in the Russian avant-garde movement, and his work continues to be influential in the study of Russian art and culture. He is considered one of the most important Russian art historians of the 20th century. His critical and theoretical work has been published in numerous books and articles, and he is widely regarded as a key figure in the development of contemporary art theory. Shvartsman’s work explores the relationship between art and politics, and he was a vocal critic of Soviet censorship and propaganda. He was also a frequent collaborator with other leading figures in the Russian avant-garde movement, including Boris Groys and Ilya Kabakov. Shvartsman’s legacy continues to be celebrated in Russia and beyond, and his work remains an important influence on contemporary art and culture. **"suggestion of painting" on his first visit.**
Dedicated to... A Confession

Oh! Can you comprehend?!
a blue angel is familiar to me
My “I” extracts the rustle of yellow wings.
And the guardian of my Spirit
Is the Archangel Michael, now white.
All seven. And the restrained colour
on the feathers of wings. And the light
appears.
I see their lines of flights, eternity is
disjointed.
Here is their trace: I see, I see, I see
the essences (I) feel the numbers
the lighting step of warps,
The vision of celestial plains is immobile
and the meaning of the prophetic voice.
Oh! My friend, know:
I am called there
where the eye is inward
they look and hear
with the eyes of hearing the voice
they read the deathly quiet
and the rudiment is elected.
Mikhail Shvartsman
[late 1980s]

The sunrise is fine
The sunset is fine
But not our delight is the reason for that
And the light has its depths
The object with its dark edge
Does not in any way border the light,
But comes from under it, probably
or in it.
[After 1987]

Whoever loves God
is part of Him.

Mikhail Shvartsman
POEMS

Painting Pictures

Good Friday?
An instant of instants
Through the haze
of time
through the pearls
of dreams
and
tears
I plunge into the vision:
Prophecy
is linear.

Through the aches of whispers
Through the spaces of expectations
And Golgotha,
A dense
bloom,
Callumny,
Callumny,
Callumny!
The poplars – roots upwards
Are linear
In a blue puddle.

Through the fates of creeks,
The breathing of white mallows,
April
The lip is cherry,
Through the beads
Of tears
And dreams
The sound
Uprising by colour,
Like a crucified man,
is linear.

You fear the blue
The flowers are flattened out
Needled by luxury
The moisture is flattened out
The pen is flattened out
The gardens are flattened out
You fear the blue

The Platonic fore-green of leaves
The fore-yellow of a Vermeer dream
The fore-silver in the hallway of
Honeyed calm:
The fore-rippling of dragonflies
With fore-moth wings
You fear the blue
M. Shvartsman. 1974 from the
Nativity of Christ.

Behold everything lies something different
the different shows
the different silvers
the different in colours
the different in calm
You fear the blue
1974

Verses in a Spirit
1983 from the Nativity of Christ, Moscow
To my Iroida on her Birthday

Looking at me, as if at myself,
I suffered
endured
grew accustomed – Believed
for nights I waited at the keen door
for the tired one,
feared for him,
I prayed
Here he is – it has passed!
he knows the beast –
– its number
Who is this – the Gift of my Fate?
You are Iroida.
And do not remember
Either teardrops
or offences.
How I love –
I have not overloved: Everything is still not
enough
I live for you
for your sake
I shine with you.
Hierat

Behind everything lies something different
the different shines
the different silvers
the different in colours
the different in calm
You fear the blue
1974

The Platonic fore-green of leaves
The Platonic fore-green of leaves

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Whoever loves God
is part of Him.

Portrait of the Artist’s Wife Iraida Shvartsman. 1952
Cat. 296

Portrait of the Artist’s Wife Iraida Shvartsman. 1952
Cat. 296
CONVERSING
WITH MIKHAIL SHVARTSMAN
It is not a concept; it is a revelation. Hieratism can only be genuinely called a concept in the civil-philosophical sense, gravitating by proliferation and flowing into a customary channel. It goes without saying that there is an entire series of reasons, which are expounded; it has its own apothecary.

The hieratic experience of mankind dates thousands of years. Strictly speaking, however, the hieratic testimony of the Holy Spirit was interpreted for more than three centuries. To appear today in old, congregational forms is lifeless stylisation. A new summons is made from on high. The hieratic school teaches the reading of tokens, which the initiated left for themselves in past incarnations. We hear the voice of the “I” – an immortal particle of God in us. The “I” of the hierat engages in the eternal work of “I”, embalming the Spirit and concentrating it in a sign of the Spirit.

The Spirit expresses its transcendental task. It teaches Avalaide’s thread in the labyrinths of cultures, a threadimmered in the flesh. The sign of the Spirit is an hieratic sign. 

Hieratic is a Greek word, meaning the sacred, the spiritual, the sacred-sacred—indeed immortal. A total of fourteen notions. The hieratic signs are strictly hieratic. The hieratic structure of images is iconic, i.e. consists each time, in every act, before a concrete incarnation. The hieratic does not name the sign and is not tempted by a verbal name, for in its essence it creates the secret name Hera-sign. The Bible speaks of prophesying any mention of the sacred name.

Everything will be told in its own time and in its own place. The summoned initiated will read the entire mystical text of the given incarnation of the hierat. His labour is endless. The secret of the ecstatic summoned initiated will read the entire mysterial text of the given incarnation. It has its own apothecary.

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Mikhail Matveyevich, do you remember, you once said that you were capable of spiritual work? You listed several qualities necessary for a student. I only remember two – a sense of hierarchy and returning to bed a genius and wake up talentless.

There you go, something has appeared.

But you feel how, after the studio, you go out into the light of God and all the colours around become more acute? The feeling for colour grows more acute. I liked Chagains, we would sometimes go out of the studio and he would say: “Mikhail Matveyevich, look how beautiful the sky is washed.” I am probably a realist at heart. I have a great feel for nature. In my own way, of course. Hieratics, incidentally, has all of this – man, trees and flowers, only on such a scale and expressed in a sign, sublimated in a sign. Hieratics do not contradict nature. On the contrary. They bring it out with even greater power, more profound and crystal-like.

There is a number 59. Will we make it on time?

If you want to know, this piece of yours could be the tuning-fork for the whole thing, but you have completely ruined it. A terrible person. I once said to Dyşkov: “You are a terrible person.” He flew at me: “Matf! A terrible person!” He was offended. He does not understand humour. I am afraid of such people.

What is that? Merely a set of details. You do not sense the whole. You do not see the large sign. Seek the sign. There should be a sign. Else nothing will turn out.

What do you think? Should the hieratics be exhibited? It is bad to resolve the hieratics in the process of exhibiting. The viewer, for example, according to his or her desire, could turn the canvas on its axis. But how can this be done? The boards are so heavy.

And the light? I prefer diffused upper light. In any case, not bright light. Is it necessary to turn the boards over? They can be exhibited just like that. Fumed oak – what is wrong with turning? I like it. If the worst comes to the worst, the canvas could be placed inside a box, with small margins, as in a niche. I have seen such examples. I liked them.

You’ve been brightening it up again. Your favourite. I can’t cure you of this.

Look: red and blue and green and yellow. Plus black to boot. What are you thinking? Clean it off while it is still wet, use whatever you want, and begin with – at least with black and vienna. Maybe, maybe, add some more white, but only if the worst comes to the worst…

Shvartsman paints with three colours. Which is a lot as it is. Four is already an orgy. And you have gone even further, it is ackinking to even look at…

Oenkas was once at a friend’s studio. He saw his friend adding all the points he had to the palette. Like a rainbow, simply dazzled the eyes. He said: “I want to achieve something as Shvartsman.” Oenkas said to him: “Shvartsman works with four colours.” “What, I don’t believe you.” And he didn’t. He thought that Oenkas was deliberately hoodwinking him.

Incidentally, when Namakin was here, he also asked: “Do you use Windows?” “No, our own cases.” I don’t think he believed me either. He probably decided that I was hiding something, afraid that he would find out.

You have exhausted everything. You are collapsing into the usual scheme of things. There is not one single living place. Leave it.

May I dash it off? Leave it. You can do an imposition later. Take the invention, it is the one you like, and make an imposition.

Only first of all, wash it three times. With strontium and pink.

Take this canvas. Paint it as God put it on your soul. Do not ruin the good. There is much good here. The sides are not bad. In general, you yourself know everything, you have already been trained. On you go. With God’s help!
All right, paint something here! Why? How, now, brown cow. Without thinking. As God places on the soul Without looking back. Without crap.

It is not good that it is like an icon. Direct associations are an indication of overcoming something. For I don’t know how many years, I have been unable to rid myself of several pieces on the canvas, left from the lazy adaptations of students. How many times do I have to say “I do not paint icons.”

Tolya used to be all ochres, but now he has this thing about reds. With what difficulty all this had to be later overcome. How many times do I have to say “I do not paint icons.”

I spent years on this. But there are also hierarchies higher than the old. They are bought for quality no worse than Cranach. Multi-parted, de-

What a flight that was. If only I had stopped. What idiotism!

What is needed. With what difficulty all this had to be later overcome. What was needed. With what difficulty all this had to be later overcome. What was needed. With what difficulty all this had to be later overcome.

The Life-Giving Source. Immediately associated with icons. That is no use. It should be more abstract.

What would you call this canvas?“ Cherkizov, A-halt! Rostov! What else?


All right then. What else? It could be called simply On a Yellow Background. Once in May. Why in May?

Directing the Launch to the Shore. You’re at it again.

Let’s call it simply Cheremisov, Brother of a Hero. What are you laughing at? It is easy for you to laugh; I am in anguish.

A profound crisis. Particularly in sculpture. What an hieratic canvas is so staggering close up. One wants to touch it.


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If it were possible to record, at every stage, the metamorphosis on a film, at least a black-and-white one, this would bring together the richest research material. How the metamorphosis changes on the canvas is no less interesting than the final result. I spent years on this. But there are also hierarchies higher than the old. They are bought for quality no worse than Cranach. Multi-parted, de-

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Let’s call it simply Cheremisov, Brother of a Hero. What are you laughing at? It is easy for you to laugh; I am in anguish.
Look. It is fine that way. As a rule, if everything has been resolved on one side, then the same applies to the other. But it nevertheless seems to me that the previous position was better. The sign is more abstracted.

And yet, in that sign, the sign is spread out, in flatness. In hieratics, the Object. Objectivity will slip away every time. Only the eye will catch, somewhere, a direct perspective, almost architecture – stop – a thought – it is already too late to correct or in general in another dimension. The viewer simultaneously sees the sign both outside and inside, in the left and right. In the Perfect, it is empty. It is worse than a passe, and it makes better when everything has already taken place. That is the temptation. The evil one never sleeps. “Concrét ”, straighten it, stick it to the wall, throw the brush in a ladle, it needs to be dried up a bit. You are guaranteed to spoil it. Let it settle. “God will give you a day and God will give food.”

A problem, a problem again. And each time a new one. It is easier for an icon-painter. Canonic painting removes a mass of problems. He knows where the red or ash should be, dispenses how to come and animate there.

In hieratics, any repetition is a sign of overwriting, of course, imperfection. It is easiest of all to resolve this canvas in the spirit of the Renaissance. A break-through at the top and things are ready and the problem is solved. Everything immediately falls into place. Or imagine a cross, white, say, in the centre. It is simple and everything is ideal. Consider the canvas to be resolved.

Yes, you would be fine. I do not ever recall such a resolution. Well, the cross will resolve almost any canvas. I deliberately do not shift to a conceptual level. Then anyone will immediately say: “I understand everything.” Everyone will no doubt like it. Because it will be comprehensible. A familiar association is always convenient and comfortable. It can be said: “This canvas is truly lyrical. In only one way, any stylisation, any scepticism, is a crime against the Holy Spirit.

But everyone, at least, is confused. Or at least cannot do a mistake. Or at least cannot come to good intentions, to be worse than the specimen. At worst, to tickle one’s pride. And we all know where good intentions lead. But the war of the Hierat is to the Holy Spirit. Through revelation, and not through hypocrisy, not even by way of the best specimens. In hieratics, the inner link of cultures makes it simultaneously profound and traditional and to a high degree contemporary and original. Pressed, rather than juggled forms. Metamorphosising and not compilation. This is the hieratic criterion. This is the criterion of perfection. It is not important whether the canvas took one year or one day to paint.

They say that Turner washed his watercolours 30 [1] times. And we wash them 120 times and this is not the limit. Tempera likes to be washed. Tempera is a divine medium. Oil cannot be even compared to it. Or is it a sensual material. Tempera is a spiritual material. It is the closest to my own heart. In oil, it is difficult to overcome its annoying slippiness. I previously worked in oil, but always degreased it in my own way. Now, true, acrylic is fashionable. But it quickly dries and you cannot wash it away. That is not quite what is needed. Provided, we will assimilate it too, if tempera vanishes. Whatever the case, acrylic is better than tempera made from PVA glue. But canva, tempera is the thing for hieratic painting, you mark my words. Surely they won’t stop making it!

... I want to say to you: “Bear in mind at what stage the Sign wants to do what. In object. It objectives. It wants to say something at a certain time. I am a thing. I am volumetric. Therefore the hierat should always be on the alert!”

And what is so bad with that!
it. In a certain sense, this is so. But I want to talk about something else. A sign is not an object, which can be touched and coloured or which casts a shadow. It has another reality. This is a thought existence and it is expressible in the hieratic form. Curves, their relationship is the enigma and essence of an hieratic work. The heart does not even concern himself with the colour (the choice of colour). The colour metamorphoses can change up to a hundred times a day. Curves are, if you want to know, oxygen for the heart and the hieratic school as a whole. You know, back at the bureau, how many kids I sent to the library to study architecture and sketch entases.

Look here. This curve is hollow, biological, anthropomorphic, a bent’s curve. In short, pretty awful. You don’t have a hope of reaching the spiritual sphere with those curves. Look at this simply lifeless scheme. Zosomic lines are like plants or flowers. Not exactly high flying.

By the way, a slight lack of overcoming has remained on some of my own things. And this continues to rattle. Curves should be melodious and tense – spiritual and always spontaneous. A line should breathe – that is my commandment.

You say: “What sort of freedom is this if you take an invention and adapt it for the canvas?”

Yes, I cannot help characteristically, dissectively and soulishly, then yes, this is not freedom, but anguish. In general, if you want to know, complete freedom is the absence of choice. When you hold an invention in your hands, you will never fall down. It will not allow this to happen. This is like the score for a singer or the safety-wire for an acrobat. He can also be sure that he will not fall and smash it and give him freedom of free falling. So, it is an invention in the hands and a master behind your back… In the hieratic school, the freedom is astonishing. Chaskin63 used to say: “Mikhail Matveyevich, why is that when you stand behind my back, I feel as if I am flying, or delight when you are right beside me, yet there is none of this when I get home?”

You understand everying. Axes are here, there, on these boards. How long can this go on? Choking already. You love to slide into a usual scheme. Where is the initiative? If you want to know, there should be some madness. Spontaneously if you like, you have done everything so correctly that I could cry. You really enjoy embellishing. How will you fit your beloved schemes into this? I don’t understand, surely you do not actually do like this? I would have long since died of boredom. I do not know, perhaps there is something I do not understand. It would be better to sit and chum out some still-life. Seek different colours and perfect perfection! Yalta Simons62 was an expert at this. But spontaneity and love of the world, the real subject are here. Look, closely at the old Dali masters. What mad mystery and, despite all, lightness, without this weariness working that is so fashionable today.

In general, what I want to say to you is this: no matter what, you have to be alive. We do not have any other option.

You have to understand yourself, nothing can be hidden behind eyes, mouths, flowers or clouds in hieratic, you cannot hide behind the subject or even the concept, like in Suprematism, for example. We have other resources. Virtually imperceptible ones. We almost never ask, you answer the Soul of man? Or surprise yourself? If you yourself are empty and have nothing to say, except repeat yourself and past your life, free yourself! You have to be alive and to attempt to be different. It makes no difference whether you are tired or not. But to sit down and rest.

You know, when I have approached the canvas, that is it. You should fly. As the poet wrote once: “I hate all dead meat. I love all life.”

I remind you once again: we do not have any special resources like this. Take Sol, for example. Exercise yourself in the art system, Everything is pre-planned – the stages of work, what to begin with, how and with what to finish. To paint in hints. What can you answer the Soul of man with? Or surprise? How can you be different here? It is not freedom. You cannot attach a label. What is there to answer the Soul of man with? Or to surprise with? How can you be different here? It is de-separation.

Imagine that you are playing on a string. You hold one end, while the other is in the heavens. If you weaken the string, there will not be any sound. If you pull too hard, you will break it. So it is in hieratics. Constant prayer through deeds.

What happens when the heaven’s turn away? A string has two ends! Do not worry. The Lord takes care of His own.

You are probably thinking, I’ve lost count of the days Shvartsman has gone to his studio, not even touched the canvas, and left tired, as he has said, in the studio. Why, no, I understand.

Yes, I understand. Yes, I understand, but I sometimes grow tired when I meditate. This work sometimes takes more out of you than simple weaving the brush. Believe me, I am not liny. Inna constantly asks me: What do you do today in the studio? And I have nothing to say. She sometimes even feels hurt, thinking that I am hiding something from her. But what can I say? I really did go to the studio, sat down at a canvas and even failed to change my clothes. And so I sat until dusk, without moving away. True, I did drink some tea, I think. This stage of meditation is the most difficult. Like a lion about to leap. Like the calm before the storm. When you mentally prepare for a dash. That is the most important moment. The canvas is almost ready. Everything would seem to be there, the only thing is to make a mistake, not to tie your will and past stages. Better to go and sleep. No, my friend, you must not slip away. True, I did drink some tea, I think. This stage of meditation is the most difficult. Like a lion about to leap. Like the calm before the storm. When you mentally prepare for a dash. That is the most important moment. The canvas is almost ready. Everything would seem to be there, the only thing is to make a mistake, not to tie your will and past stages. Better to go and sleep.

But a skillful destruction is not for the hierat. Sometimes, a fragment lives until the final moment on my canvas, without disappearing. Metamorphosis should exhaust itself and not merely destroy itself. It has its own length of life. This must be felt. Not before or after, but when this is needed.

And when it is needed? That is the whole point.

Nothing can be resolved speculatively in hieratics. You cannot say, for example, do it this way and it will be better. Even if this particular course works on other boards, that does not mean that the formula will work in all cases of life. I can never say with certainty how the metamorphosis will move. In hieratics, the hand is as if you want to have the hand. Trust the hand. Begin and you will see what is correct. Only not with a man’s head, but by concentrating and praying.

Mikhail Shvartsman in his studio. 1988
From the positions of an Hierat, species have their own hierarchy, although no known system of the theory of view. The heirat sees the world of anthropomorphism: the world of curves and the special spaces created by them. Lines create forms and a form has its own hierarchy. From this point of view, any beetle or fly behoves me far more than, for example, a dove or even a peacock. Although birds are commonly regarded as ambassadors of the divine hierarchies. Angels are likened to birds. It is difficult for me to dispute anything first hierarchy of demanification. The secret of this is truly great. For the heirat, the “counterpoint in the coffin” is always a kernel of the twig, a kernel of the living. Each creates his own icon. And we can observe its features not only in the “counterpoint in the coffin”, but, also, say, on old, faded photographs, sometimes in modern face expressions, sometimes in images made by people who feel this transformation of a living face. By the way, the “counterpoint in the coffin” is, for the heirat, the face of a familiar face, you see features of ancestors, for example mongiblog characteristics, not previously spotted. I also once noted a funereal ceremony, a corpse, and could not tear my eyes away from the metamorphosis of the face taking place directly before my eyes. It all seemed somewhat inappreciable, even sacrilegious. But an artist sometimes sees the miracle at the most inappropriate times. Remember! The miracle is given to you and you do not see it! That’s how it is. Why speak about that at the design bureau? Here is why. In order to understand how styles develop, in architecture for example, it is necessary to understand the transformation of forms depends on the tasks of the era. What comes from or how the “broken pediment” appeared in the Baroque period. Without understanding how the forms of architecture and their texts links are transformed, it will seem that everything is thought up by the will of the artist, i.e. deformatively. But that is not right. As an example, I show you my students an icon and, for example, a portrait by Picasso. In both, the person is depicted anatomically incorrectly, but what an abyss between them! What a sublime transformation in the icon and what nonsensuousness of the deformation of the early-twentieth-century artist seems. Although I highly rate many of them – Rouault, Modigliani and many other line masters – you discover the old masters and, in the first place, the shock, the hurt, but then you are in their own hierarchy and I would not lower their significance.

I remember myself when I was young. I could spend hours mentally transforming the allegoric houses and images. I was veryMachineExtremely. Particularly when I was interested in the figurative. I was never drawn to masks, freaks or monsters. All that seemed so too simple and unoriginal. What interested me particularly was the search for the hidden sign in the face. I noticed that two eyes were a sign, two eyes and a nose were signs, two eyes, a nose and a mouth were also a sign and so on. I was simply absorbed by this. Thus, this hierarchy exhausted itself. The hieratures appeared. But this is a special conversation. The hierarchy is not about transformation, and most importantly, discern the one from the other, it is the first necessary skill for working under my guidance. Have you understood anything?

Something.

Very well then, while we are in a museum, I will show you a clear example.

No, my friend, you have to learn to paint in red. This is not a colour, it is puke with blood added. It is like open wound. No use at all. Look at old masters, look at them, simply terribly. The divine red on old, faded gobelins, medieval miniatures and icons is inexplicably fine, on the verge of madness. They pacified the red, that is why it is so enchanting. No one understood the colour. Some say, in my case, I have not seen it with anyone. Everywhere it is either shrieking and expressive or a helpless, sluggish pink or vulgar-like. If you try, I do not like crimson. I sometimes use it for washing off. Carmines is

selfs look more masculine. This is pure demonry and deformation. Have you ever noticed how death transforms the face of a man? The secret of this is truly great. For the heirat, the “counterpoint in the coffin” is always a kernel of the twig, a kernel of the living. Each creates his own icon. And we can observe its features not only in the “counterpoint in the coffin”, but, also, say, on old, faded photographs, sometimes in modern face expressions, sometimes in images made by people who feel this transformation of a living face.

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Look how the hieratures begin to work with one another. Huh?

Well, well, well. What do you say?

Great, Mikhal Matveyevich!

Ah-ha!

And you thought. Shvartsman was not made by a finger. And you say…

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Bear in mind, monumentality is not achieved by simple, mechanical increasing a miniature to the size of a wall. It will still remain a miniatures. This does not enable to increase everything to the size of a house and pass it off as monumentality. This is a defect. A minute form will always be minute, no matter how much it is inflated. As they say in Odessa, this will always be shit.

A holy large form can withstand any diminution and will not get worse. That is the law.

Bear in mind also that when you work on a wall, for example, painting a fresco or working on these large formats, do not take everything to the point of razor-sharp accuracy, as if you are painting a miniature. This requires another form of painting and another approach to the details. The size of the canvas dictates the interpretation. The texture should be harsher and the painting should be simpler. If you have ever visited the St Ferapont Monastery, you probably went up close to the wall. That is where the school of monumental painting is. I do not plan to take these large boards to the same quality as those you have ever visited. Everybody knows that I do not like this. I have seen some absolutely terrific blueprints from the time of Peter the Great. What graphic art, now that is a school.

You like to take everything to wearisome “perfection”. You must not.

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You talk about Pollock all the time. What about Pollock? Do you suppose he grew up in an empty place? His Tachisme is the poured form of nature. His “lyrical here” is essence. One theory states that the world aspirates towards entropy. Human activities counterpoint entropy. If, for example, something is left for a period of time, for example this room, first everything is covered in dust, then there is a goal of wind and broken glass, and all of it goes. One year, ten years, there are none. A house without an owner falls apart. This is a manifestation of entropy. Some people clearly help and intensely this process. I regard Pollock as a participant in this process. But this is also life, like any disaster. If Pollock is not, in any way, quite the opposite.

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any old icon, from the point of view of “brightness”, will leave all Frenchmen far behind with their sirup. They are accustomed and prepared to a different value. What a disappointment. Just think…

You do not have to be sentimentally or wounded pride. We are all in the same boat. You remember how horrendously difficult it was with the “little old man”. Mikhail Matveyevich, I am choking! He could not endurance Shvartsman’s read energy. Such people are no use for the hieratical school. That is why I am afraid to take in the school. You say something to him in a tone and he is offended forever more. Taking offence is a sure sign of an unluckened person. Talented people never take offence. Too much free time is needed to take offence.

***

I pray that God gives me the strength to finish my undertaking. I can already feel some weakness, I am often ill. Do not do the all this. When I do not work, I begin to hate myself. Everything irritates me – people, objects. What is sort of a Shvartsman is that it does not paint his canvases. It is no longer Shvartsman, can you picture an old Shvartsman who no longer works? Can anything be healed if it is too late?

I don’t ask to be completely cured, only to get healthy again for at least some time. The important thing is not to land back in hospital again. Each day is important.

It is terrible to think of the years I lost when I was young. Six years in the army alone. Can you imagine, six, six years? The golden years slip away. You spend your youth like water and then hoard them like pennies. Why are you sulking with me? I am talking sense. I am not trying to offend you. You see yourself how the work was going. Headlong. What sort of mutual offenses can there be here? At such moments, you do not feel the ground under your feet. Anything can roll off the tongue. Have you ever seen a group of horses tearing across the steppe? I have, in my youth. You can immediately picture nomads. The entire mass heading towards Russia, sweeping away everything in its path. Nothing can stop a group of racing horses.

When there is an aim, a headling pursuit begins, there is no place for sentimentality or wounded pride. We are all in the same boat. You remember how horrendously difficult it was with the “little old man”. Mikhail Matveyevich, I am choking! He could not endurance Shvartsman’s read energy. Such people are no use for the hieratical school. That is why I am afraid to take in the school. You say something to him in a tone and he is offended forever more. Taking offence is a sure sign of an unluckened person. Talented people never take offence. Too much free time is needed to take offence.

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You say a contradiction. Yes, if you want to, I am made of contradictions. What is honest truth, not a contradiction?

Mikhail Matveyevich, what was your opinion of the kids yesterday?

I liked them, they are fine kids. I remembered myself when I was young. I was never so naive and stupid. You would not believe it, I seriously discussed Repin. Today’s youth no longer falls for that. And what about “dear comrades”?

Valeriy Kovalchuk,22, Philosopher

I liked his wife, don’t you think?

Uh-uh.

Did you notice? He simply froze when he saw the painting. He is, of course, a bit frightened to look at it. Anything can happen with such a man. He can knock you on the head if he doesn’t like something. A dangerous person. But one feels that he likes painting.

You can see that right away. There is no fooling me. Someone else will come and tell him that he has “boobs made for papa.” But not this one. I immediately saw how his eyes lit up when he was looking at the canvases. That costs. And is extremely rare. There are few people who really like painting. For my part, I have encountered extremely few. Music, for example, is a far more popular. That is the honest truth. But painting – alas. There are heaps who love to rave about it. Take, for example. They are very nice people, but I see they don’t understand the first thing about painting. And there is nothing you can do about it.

This blue is capable of reorientating the entire colour structure of the painting. It is the same height as everything else. I would tell them that was all a government commission, that I once saw Mayakovsky’s letters to Lily Brik. All his soppy phrases simply tormented my stomach. So much for Bakelée, Élémire and Lucie. This “readiness” does not, in essence, describe anything at all. The myth of a man is much deeper, significant and even more realistic than reality itself. Haven’t you noticed?

Who? I don’t know. Another will bluster some lies about himself or someone else, and you will listen – isn’t that right? So why would I lie? I can’t do that. It would be interesting to hear, however.

Some foreigners recently visited us. They told me the following story. They had visited the studio of an elderly artist. They asked: “Do you have anything from this period?” He was pleased that they were interested in his foreign. And you know how everyone relates to foreigners here – like you, a bit of a gullible. The canvases were all a government commission.

Don’t you think about painting the 1950s–60s, which is now fashionable with them. What is known as “totalitarian art.” They came specially to Russia and even travelled round the provinces. They asked: “How do you anything from this period?” He was pleased that they were interested in him. Foreigner! And you know how everyone relates to foreigners here – like you, a bit of a gullible. The canvases were all a government commission. He simply turned my stomach. So much for

...They did not listen to a word I say. I bawled at them and broke a blackboard. Those schoolkids have gotten to me. I was simply transfixed. That is true freedom. She is, by the

...I deliberately do not take womenfolk into the hieratic school. That’s a different case. It’s a state institution. Like going out into the

...You try your hardest, the canvas even appears in your dreams, and then some idiot decides to make an album and does everything the way he thinks best.

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Don’t worry, I’ll make ‘em dance.

Watch out, else they’ll cart you straight off to the lunatic asylum, direct from the classroom. That would really give them something to laugh at and remember for the rest of their lives. ‘What a fine teacher Dmitry Markovich was!’ So responsive and so easy to wind up. It was simply a joy to drive him up the wall. Like a cubistic cluck. Only not quite right in the head.

Don’t worry, I’ll make them draw as good as gold.

And fly and foil.

That’s right.

Well, well! Good on you, old man! Do you know the saying – as stupid as an old woman’s navel?

No, no, I am too old for her. Though she did see that I was an un-

It was you she was looking at.

You never are. Give it to me straight, stop talking crap. Had she

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“My father hid two Jews from the Germans during the war. They now help me now.”

“Another version of this reply: "No, although he knows this matter with pedantic precis-"

“A little Herostratus in the making.”

“I have amassed a lot over the past week. I have no intention of continuing a canvas just so that no one can

“With pleasure. I enjoy looking at children’s drawings. There is much to learn from them… Oh, look at the wonderful mess! That is a future artist, you can see right away. That one is not, he has been hopelessly spoiled by cartoons. They are simply a scourge. They all want to look like Disney. Inflated, puffy lines – sickening to look at. It is impossible to learn on those ideals and there is no need anywhere. All you need do is show them a piece of paper, they will go about it themselves. I see that you have some very talented children. I went up to one and asked: “Who do you want to be when you grow up?” “A doctor.” “And an astronaut?” “No. I’m not good enough to be an astronaut. I only got a C for gym.” “You know, if you become an artist, you can also be an astronaut and anything else.” “Really? You have ever been on the moon?” “Yes, many times. I am an artist.”

“I don’t know who that was, it was Arkhaiko. That one is still an astronaut. He draws and asks me. "Danyk Markovich, do you like to set fires?" “To what?” “Things.” A future artist. Will you take him on as your student when he grows up?” I doubt it, he is sure to burn something. He will say it was an artefact. A little Herostratus in the making.

“Mikhail Matveyevich, aren’t you afraid that all these inventions will be considered projects of future heresies. Some tempera works are absolutely identical.

“I can’t stuff a cloth down every throat.”

“A concept produced calling this interview with Mikhail Shvartsman – supplementing the information presented in the article (printed from this publication). ““The moment of recognition has been left here. The linear resolution is visible in its emblematic fullness. This can give an impulse for a large board, even a wall. This is not a project, because every time, even after the canvas is painted, the works change continually. The invention with which everything began can only be recognized with great difficulty. What you regard as "magnified inventions" [do you understand correctly?]

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“Two or three months.

“Really?

“Listen, old man… I have been invited to work in Germany. What do you think of that? If the two of us went with them? They said they would provide us with accommodation and a studio. Your opinion? We will have to take our own canvases! What for! Everything is already there. They say that it is expensive and difficult to bring canvases from here. It is easier to organise everything and work there. What do you say? for how long? Two or three months.

“Why the silence? I’m just trying to imagine you in these conditions. Anyhow, the first month will be spent preparing the boards and getting used to the acrylic paints (there is no casing temperatures there). We still don’t know how things will go. Acrylic dries quickly. You spend a long time working and they will need everything quick for the opening of the exhibition. They will hurry you and you will get irritated. You will say goodness knows what to them, each side will start making claims about the money spent

“Medicine used to treat heart disease.

“Mikhail Matveyevich, you say that this work is painted with appropriates, then that is Velázquez’s school (counting who painted which part). He might only have stood at the back or just given his students instructions and left them to it. They did the preparatory work and he went up and waved his brush. Look specially to see what the touch of a master means.

“With El Greco, the restorers have removed all the glazing and spooned the work. Write El Greco school or El Greco himself, but the work is a different one. Literature has written that this was his masterpiece, but in fact, it is an act of kerygma, direct enthickening of the Sign of the Spirit – spirit-extraction in the sign

“Before World War Two, a Christening in Great Britain, a Christening in the UK.

“Another version of this reply: “No, although he knows this matter with pedantic precis-"

“The underground will close and we will have to take a taxi. It’s a long sprint. Hold on. It’s stuck in the collar. Give me a hand. Now it’s okay-chik.”

“Mikhail Matveyevich, your scarf and the level of thinking will be the same. The underground will close and we will have to take a taxi. Hold on. It’s stuck in the collar. Give me a hand. Now it’s okay-chik.”

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