

Art that stayed hidden behind the Iron Curtain

NEW forms. Tamara Bassi surveys one of the post-Soviet paintings on view at Horsham Arts Centre. The exhibition charts Socialist Realism works from the 1960s to the more Western style of fin de siècle Ukrainian art.



EAST meets West in a rare exhibition of Soviet and post-Soviet paintings at Horsham Arts Centre.

Art from Ukraine comprises works from three distinguished painters from the Kiev and Dnipropetrovsk regions of the country which broke free of Soviet rule in August 1991.

Together the works of Petro Magno, 82, Panas Tytenko, 38, and Grygoryi Shyshko, who died in 1994 aged 74, span a period from the 1960s to the 1990s.

The mixture of landscapes, still life and figurative pieces which adorn two floors of the venue in North Street have been described by exhibition promoter, Tamara Bassi, curiously as both "living" and "dying" art.

The managing director of London-based Danusha Fine Arts said the painters' manipulation of light and colour brought images to life — "There is no better wonder in life than a sun," she said, quoting Tytenko.

But the reference to a painting style in decline stems from the changing historical context in Eastern Europe.

Prevailing ideology in

the USSR die should refle Realism, as ar at HAC. Si explained: "in the former 20th centur many new ide were forced to that celebrate ideal."

Tamara cor was to point to the state and realism of real

In the latte 20th century, art was beco modern, Sovie trained classi serve a school

In a global meant the wo duced were un

Tamara s; training preco tic career in ti tem: "To be Soviet Union a member of ; and to do ths obey the rul when the state buyer of art."

Naturally, reacted again trols and th includes exam ously hidden v

Shyshko's paintings of



tated that art
ct Socialist
t co-ordinator
aron Trott
Communism
USSR in the
y restricted
as and artists
y paint works
id the Soviet

ccurred: "Art
the reality of
the ideas, the
life."

r half of the
hen Western
oming more
t artists were
ally to pre-
of realism.

context this
rks they pro-
ique.

id years of
ded any artis-
e Soviet sys-
artist in the
you had to be
in association
it you had to
s. This was
was the main

some artists
st these con-
e exhibition
ples of previ-
orks.
: Soviet-era
churches for

example had to be kept private in a society where religion was considered to be the opium of the masses.

Tamara said: "Shyshko was a great man who was trying to find something new. He tried to break free but his paintings were not shown to anybody."

Referring to the associations to which all state artists had to belong, she said: "He would not be a member, he would have been excluded if these paintings were known."

The break up of the Eastern bloc and the new artistic freedoms that coincided with political change witnessed a move from the strict Soviet Realist model.

Tamara said the current state of Ukrainian art was typified by a growing infusion of Western influences as indicated in the more impressionistic style of some of the post-1991 paintings on show.

And the culture in the Ukraine was changing too, she said.

Businessmen in the new free market economy had become the largest purchasers of art and with no controls over training, teaching standards in art schools had dropped.

Despite the new freedoms, Tamara's reflection on the end of an era was tinged with regret.

"Now many artists are changing to contemporary art, it is easier really to be a contemporary artist."

"The school of realism is going away, there are only a few that still stick to

that — they are a dying breed. It has a historic representation though which is why a lot of the people buy the art."

The exhibition, which supports victims of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, runs until July 3 and admission is free.

Jamie Bartle