

SOVIET SOCIALIST REALISM

ARTIST: Anatoli Yurevich Nikich-Krilichevski (1918--) Moscow

TITLE: *Still-Life with the Medals of M. Isaakova* 1951

MEDIA: oil on canvas

SIZE: 58" x 65" inches

Courtesy of a private collector

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Although known as a Moscow painter, Anatoli Yurevich Nikich-Krilichevski was born April 16, 1918, in Leningrad (St. Petersburg). He studied art at the Moscow State Art Institute (The Surikov Institute) from 1935 to 1942. He saw front line action in World War II.

He became a member of the Moscow branch of the USSR Union of Artists in 1944 and has participated in many large art exhibitions both at home and abroad since 1947. In 1969, Nikich-Krilichevski had his first one-man show in Moscow. Today his art is in many Russian museums and private collections both in Russia and abroad.

His creative work is distinguished by a profound attitude toward man and nature. This attitude developed as a result of participation in World War II. His work is very laid back; he seldom "raises his voice." This restraint has been criticized on occasion for producing a lack of expression in his work. *The Painter's Son* shows the typical Nikich style. His paintings of the Great Patriotic War do not show scenes of battle but instead show the human emotions of war. They address those who suffered.

Nikich also painted portraits and still-lives. Although his still-lives such as *The Grand Still-Life* and *Still-Life with the Medals of M. Isaakova* depict everyday items, the items contain a wealth of symbolic meaning, typical of paintings of this time. For example, M. Isaakova was an Olympic skating champion, and "The collection of medals sings the praises of Soviet achievement in sport . . . And thus announces the arrival of the New Soviet Person; the view through the window of one of the eight extraordinary high-rise buildings put up in Moscow around 1950 underlines post-war construction and, more broadly, utopian striving (these buildings with their unmistakable spires, the culmination of socialist realism in architecture, feature in many paintings of the time); the flowers may be understood as a metaphor for the sun, a symbol of the bright future." (from Matthew Cullerne Bown's recent publication on Soviet Socialist Realism by Yale University Press) The use of gold and bright red accents also is typical of paintings of this period--their richness a symbol of achievement. In addition, the arrangement and thrust of the objects leads viewers' eyes outside, to the unfolding of the Soviet dream.

Nikich-Krilichevski currently works in Moscow painting his favored still-life subjects.

SUGGESTED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

QUESTIONS FOR LOOKING: (History, Aesthetics, Criticism)

How does an artist create depth of field on a flat surface? What meaning does the placement of the objects create in this painting? What is the mood of this painting and what techniques has the artist used to create this mood? How does your eye move through the painting? What do you notice first?

Using the objects in the painting, can you tell where this scene is located? What time of day or year it is or what approximate year it represents?

Is this a good painting? Do you like it and why? Is this painting done from the perspective of the owner of the objects or by someone else?

Art--Perceiving

Objective: Students will be able to analyze works of art by discussing the elements and principles used in the works of art.

Review with students the following art concepts: creating depth, value key, divisions of space in a work and how space is used, creating shadow, use of color, and how to create a mood.

Using *Still-Life with the Medals of M. Isaakova* as an example, discuss how the artist has used height placement to create the illusion of depth. Determine the overall value key of this work. Discuss how the artist has used space divisions to make an interesting composition. Have students look for evidence of depth, shadow, color, and mood in this work.

Look at still-life paintings by other artists such as Cezanne and compare how other artists used these techniques.

These techniques can be used in the art assignment that follows.

Art--Expressing/Making

Objective: Students will create an original still life containing objects which are important to them.

The Olympics is an important event and many athletes have a lifelong goal of competing in the Olympics. The medals won are very important to the athlete and reflect an important part of their lives.

Have your students create a still life which contains items that are important to them. Since the important items may not be the only things in the work, discuss with students possible techniques to use so that one element in a work of art stands out more than other elements. Stress that the viewer must be able to tell which things are of importance to the artist.

Language Arts

Objective: Students will be able to write a literary piece that creates a convincing character.

Review with students the elements and techniques used by writers to create a character.

Using the items shown in Nikich-Krilichevski's *Still Life with the Medals of M. Isaakova*, ask students to write a piece that tells who the person who won these medals is. This assignment can be done in any format desired--a narrative, drama, poem, or news item. The piece must make the reader feel he or she knows this person being portrayed and why the items pictured are important to this person.

Social Studies/Language Arts

Objective: Students will better understand at least one phase of the Olympics and will increase their research and writing skills.

With the Nagano Olympics just completed and with the 2002 Winter Olympics being held here in Utah, we are more aware of the Olympics than before.

Have students select a topic related to the Olympics to research. Possible topics are an athlete's training schedule, what it takes to get to the Olympics, and how the training impacts the life of the athlete both before and after the Olympics; what the economic impact of the Olympics is on the city that hosts the event; or what is Utah doing now to get ready for the Olympics in 2002.

Students should use a variety of sources to research their topic including books, newspaper articles, encyclopedias, magazine articles, television programs, internet sites, Olympic publications, or any other source.

Healthy Lifestyles

Objective: Students will be able to discuss whether the lifestyle of an athlete is really a healthy one.

Have students discuss the guidelines for a healthy lifestyle including diet, exercise, and use of performance enhancing drugs.

Students should pick an athlete, either an Olympic athlete, an athlete of local interest such as a Jazz basketball player, or a former well-known athlete. Each student will research the lifestyle of that athlete, looking at the person's diet and how that diet changes during intense training, any restrictions such as weight-- either real or understood--in the athlete's sport and how the athlete deals with that restriction, how the lifestyle of the athlete "off the field" impacts his or her ability to compete, or any other aspect of an athlete's life that has either a positive or detrimental effect on the individual's current life or future. Students will discuss their findings in class, focusing on whether athletes are living a healthy lifestyle.