

ALEX XATKEVICH

Born 1950, Riga (Latvian SSR)

Alex Xatkevich, outsider art artist, is currently living in the most western region of Russia, located between Poland and Lithuania. Isolated from the outer world since the time when his home country, Latvia, was a part of the Soviet Union. There is not so much to say about his past. He keeps silence, we can only guess. But the fact is that his life is full of drama and hidden behind seven seals.

Alex was born in 1950 in Riga (Latvian SSR). His mother was native Latvian, father came from Belarus. At age of 18 he was sentenced to 15 years in prison, probably for his activities as an assumed political dissident. Without any education, after his release, and for the three following years he worked as loader until his final imprisonment. Initially sentenced to the death penalty, he spent 44 days (a number which became symbolic in his art) in a death row cell expecting doomsday. But it was soon realized by the authorities that he was mentally ill and he was subsequently moved to a high-security mental health hospital, a place where he has been living and working for the last 30 years.

He has been totally removed from the influence of political regimes, wars and schools of art, and all aspects/influences of a normal social life. Has he ever seen any prominent paintings or been to a gallery? Hardly imaginable. He never learned to draw. If you ask Alex to tell you more about his past you would hardly get any answers. He silently proposes that you to look at his paintings and discover his personality through them.

There is a strict schedule today, when he has to walk for brief periods outside, take medicine, eat, watch TV and visits to art-therapy classes. Only in these moments time exists for him. All the rest is an eternity that belongs exclusively to Alex.

Two and a half hours three times a week. That is all he has for his work. Isolated from any art rules and canons, knowledge, stereotypes, tendencies, he is fully free in his art. He is one of those rare classic Art Brut artists, still alive and hard to find.

His paintings are not spontaneous. Every line, point, color, shape are sophisticated. Number of figures that are repeating is 44. In his earlier works he drew 4, 8, 16 figures. On the back side of his paintings he gives full descriptions in Lettic.

Alex's art is not static. It certainly undergoes slow transformation and becomes more symbolical and subtle. In his art Alex goes beyond the boundaries of our world. The things that are seen as ordinary for us, for Alex are subjects of deep study and importance. And he invites any visitor to become a witness of this evolution and mystery.

His works are represented in private and museum collections in Russia and Europe.

Translated from the Russian

Publications:

Rhodes, Colin and Suvorova, Anna, *Alex Xatkevich: The Purpose will be Afterwards to Forget*, BLURB, 2020

Rhodes, Colin and Suvorova, Anna, "Alex Xatkevich: A Purpose to Remember," Raw Vision Magazine, #113,
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