

Taras Schevchenko

The great poet, ardent patriot, thinker and humanist, Shevchenko, is at one and the same time an outstanding master of Ukrainian painting and graphic art, the founder of critical realism and the folk element in Ukrainian fine arts. The creative work of Shevchenko, which was closely tied with the reality of that period and was based on the national-liberation movement, was basically connected with and directed into the future. It is an important stage in the development of realism and the folk element in art. Ukrainian artists refer to the artistic heritage of Shevchenko as one of the greatest and most valuable national traditions.



- *The inevitable value of Shevchenko's art heritage is in that it expressed the interests of the Ukrainian people living in his own era. The ideas and themes of his works as an artist expressed the moods of the oppressed masses not only in Ukraine; they also expressed the aspirations and hopes of working people of different nationalities.*
- *Shevchenko, simultaneously with Fedotov, affirmed critical realism as a new, progressive trend in Russian fine arts of that time. During his first years as a pupil of the "indoor painter", Vasiliy Shiryayev, and at the same time attending drawing classes at the "Association of Young Artists", the serf young, Shevchenko, turned to themes from the history of his homeland. He strived to convey in his compositions the sacred aspirations and deeds of the Ukrainian people, to truthfully portray their everyday life and reproduce the images of their heroic past.*
- *In his letter to the editor of the magazine, The People's Reader, Shevchenko wrote, "The history of my life is a part of the history of my homeland". These words are the key to understanding the creative work of Shevchenko the artist and poet.*
- *The themes of Shevchenko works, depicting life in Ukraine at that time, are very diverse, indeed. Among them we can single out the watercolor composition of 1841, "Gypsy Fortune-Teller", which was awarded a silver medal by the Council of the Academy of Arts. These, in turn, led to the still greater canvas, "Kateryna", in which the acute social-exposing theme sounded out in full voice. The poem of the same name served as a basis for this painting. The theme of "Kateryna" is an actual one for that period. In it Shevchenko exposed the tragic fate of a Ukrainian serf girl, who was seduced and then abandoned and disgraced by a Russian officer. This painting is an important page in the history of Ukrainian art, a new word in the formation of the folk element and critical realism in art.*

Pictures



Self-Portrait, 1840



Chihiryn viewed from the Subotiv Road, 1845



Gipsy Fortune-Teller, 1841



T. Shevchenko Kateryna, 1842

under the influence of everything seen and experienced, the idea of a periodical art edition entitled *Picturesque Ukraine* came to Shevchenko. And so, having arrived in St. Petersburg, he enthusiastically commenced this work. Shevchenko divided up the edition into three parts: Ukrainian landscapes, showing the beauty of the country or expressing its historical meaning, were included into the first part; the second part included scenes from the everyday life of that period; the third consisted of etchings, depicting the historical past of the Ukrainian people.

- Shevchenko was the first among Ukrainian artists to set before himself a task of great patriotic significance - that of acquainting the progressive people with the everyday life of the Ukrainian people, their past, as well as with the enchanting beauty of Ukrainian nature.
- However, he was unable to completely accomplish this, for soon afterwards, he was arrested and sentenced to exile. In 1844 the first and only edition of "*Picturesque Ukraine*", consisting of six etchings, came out in print. The artist depicted many themes from the life of the oppressed and suffering people. He painted what was most dear to his heart, "*The Paternal Hut of T. H. Shevchenko in the Village of Kyrilivka*"... It was here that the little orphan, Taras, spent his gloomy and joyless childhood. Here his heart was first stung by human injustice, founded on the rule of the rich over poor. The painting "*A peasant family*" is warmed by the poet's great love for the people and you can almost sense the compassion and lyrical peacefulness radiating from it.

After 14 years of separation....



*The Paternal Hut of Shevchenko
in the Village of Kyrilivka*

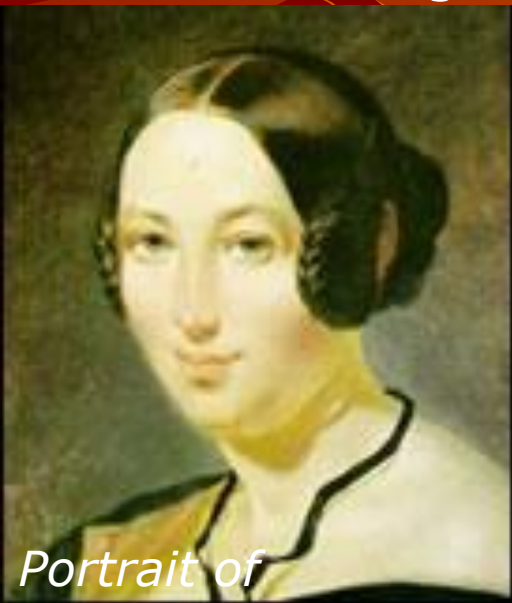


A peasant family, 1843

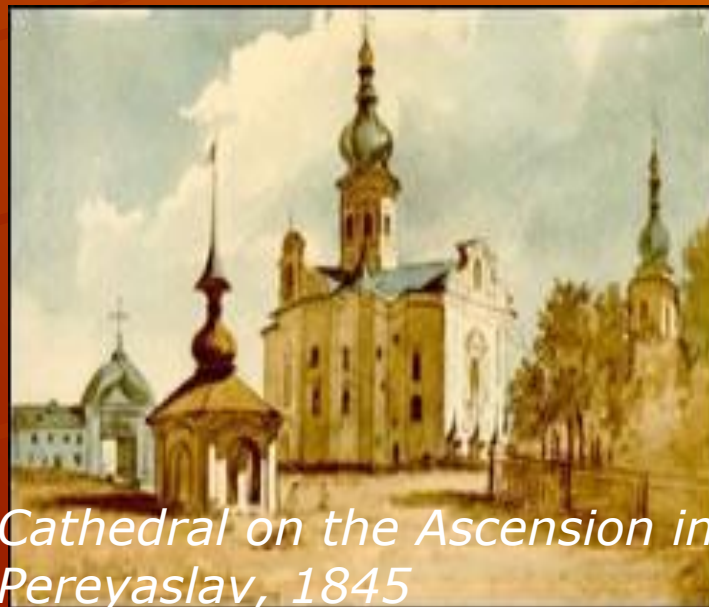


Council of Elders, 1844, Etching

- Among the paintings of this period is a great number of portraits, including those of Mayevska, Olexandre Lukyanovich, Illya Lizogub, Gorlenko, Elizabeth Keyuatova and others. In these portraits, especially in those of the women, you can easily trace the influence of Bryullov. He was delicate not only in the manner of painting, but also in the way he revealed the images, when traditional idealization united with the desire to convey the personality of a person. While still a student at the Academy of Arts, Shevchenko created a magnificent watercolor painting "*Maria*" on the theme of Pushkin's poem "*Poltava*". And already in the spring of 1841 Shevchenko's name could be found alongside such names as Karl and Olexandre Bryullov, Fedor Tolstoy, Andrei Sapozhnikov, and other outstanding artists.



Portrait of
Mayevska, 1843



Cathedral on the Ascension in
Pereyaslav, 1845



Maria, 1840

In the spring of 1845 Shevchenko completed his studies at the Academy of Arts and returned to Ukraine. But he did not stay in Ukraine for long. On April 5, 1847 he was arrested and without a trial he was exiled as a rank-and-file soldier to the far-off Caspian steppes. During his first year in exile Shevchenko portrayed himself in a uniform. The famous Shevchenko's words "*I am punished, I suffer... but I do not repent!...*" belong to this period. In his "prison without doors", as he himself called it, Shevchenko in the period of ten years created the greater part of his wonderful works. They raised Shevchenko to a still higher level, for in them his mastery became even more exact and thorough and the meaning behind them - even more acute and profound.

Self-Portrait, 1847 The works of the exile period can be divided up into three groups: portraits, landscapes and compositions.

- Of the portraits the most interesting are Shevchenko's self-portraits. Taken as a whole, they comprise one of the most valuable sources of learning about the artist's life.
- Having been sent as a soldier-guard on the Butakov expedition, which during 1848-1849 explored the shores of the Aral Sea, Shevchenko served as the expedition's artist. During the Aral expedition and later too, during another expedition into the Kara-Tau Hills, that discovered several coal-fields in Kazakhstan, and still later, during his stay at the Novopetrovsky Fortress Shevchenko created a great number of watercolor landscape paintings.



- In the sepia "*Kazakh Beggar Children*" Shevchenko portrayed himself in the background, looking on with an expression of sadness and sympathy. This self-portrait, combined with a genre scene, gave the artist an opportunity to show his own attitude to poor orphan children, as well as to all the Kazakh people, doomed by the tsar to suffer hunger and deprivation.
- In the sepia "*Kazakh Katia*" Shevchenko portrayed a girl holding a candle in front of a tombstone. In the brightly candle-lit face of the girl the artist lovingly and with deep sympathy conveyed her spiritual purity.



*Kazakh
Beggar
Children,
1853*



Kazakh Katia, 1857

Last days in Ukraine...

- In the summer of 1859, during his last days in Ukraine, Shevchenko created only a small number of sketches, for he was carefully watched by gendarmes. Under these conditions there could be no freedom of creative work. But even so, what Shevchenko accomplished is still of great interest to us. His works, executed while in Ukraine, as to their mastery and realistic expression, are way ahead of his era and can be undoubtedly placed on a par with the drawings of the most outstanding artists of the late XIX century.



Beggar in the Graveyard, 1859



Mangishlatsky Garden, 1859

Some arts..



Strengthening Irhyzkala.
1848-1850



IN KYIV. 1844



Dzhanhysahach. 1848

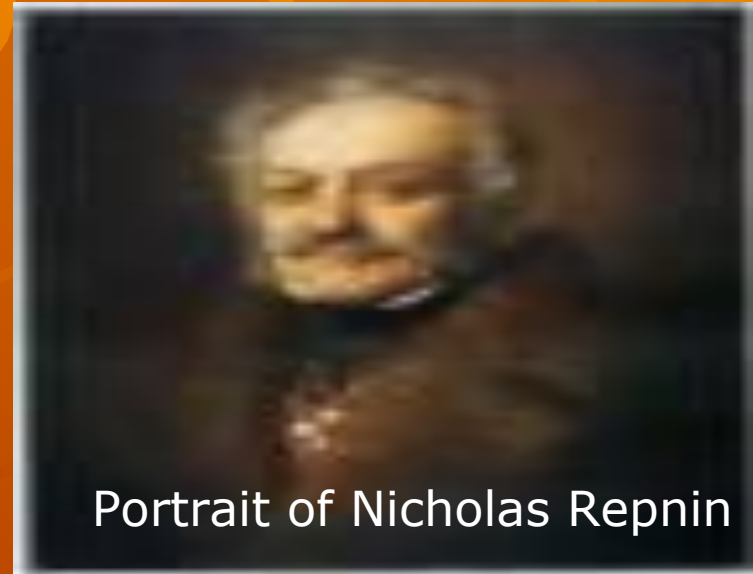


Fire in the desert. 1848

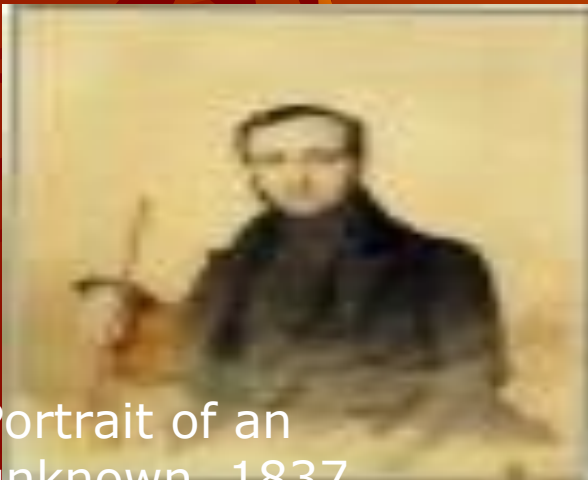
Portraits



Portrait of Nikolai Isayev



Portrait of Nicholas Repnin



Portrait of an
unknown. 1837



Women's head. 1830