

## Afterword

This book, in terms of the period when I communicated with the paintings, shines a light on the less than four years after I moved to Moscow in 1989, but the background for my reflection on the social meaning of contemporary Russian art is extended to December 1999, just before Acting President Putin rose to power. Such confinement of the extended period comes from the fact that I finished the basic draft of this book by that time. In view of the conclusion which I drew from my studies about the essential characteristics of contemporary Russian art, which had been mentioned along the lines of “introduction, development, turn and conclusion” according to the construction of this book, it is quite indispensable for the book that I make clear when this period ended. I think it is all the more indispensable because the Putin’s administration later has calmed down Russian political and economic chaos, which lasted more than ten years inclusive of the period of turmoil leading to the collapse of the Soviet Union, and has successfully drawn a line separating his days from the flow of the time till then. Under the stable administration of President Putin, looking ahead ten years or so, it is possible to guess that we will see the emergence of a new trend of painting works, reflecting the stream of thought and social conditions of these new times.

The conception of this book was worked out about six months before I moved to Moscow for the second time in April 1998, and in that half year before I fled to Moscow, I wrote up nearly 70% of the draft. But if I hadn’t got my second stay in Moscow, which allowed me to see through Russian society more deeply, I feel this book would not have been completed. Because I continued to live in Moscow after completing the manuscript, the release of the book into the world was delayed, but considering that it is the second time stay in Moscow that enabled me to complete it, I think I had no choice but to accept it.

By the way, when I returned to Japan for a short time in the summer of 2001, I came across and knew for the first time the existence of “the World Art Complete Works—Western Art” (publisher: Shogakukan), comprising twenty-eight volumes at the municipal library I happened to visit near my parents’ home, and in the part of this huge art publications, issued from 1993 to 1997, modern Russian art was also taken up. Judging from the overall construction of the complete works where each subject compiled exhaustively and comprehensively in line with the flow of the styles of

Western art history, Russian art was handled complementarily from the side, wherein I felt as if I looked at the traces of the commercial activities of a certain gallery that introduced Russian paintings to Japan during the 1970s and 1980s. This encyclopedia can be said to play a certain role in changing the situation in Japan, where Russian paintings never see the light of the day in respect that you can check it at any time if you go to the mentioned library, which I highly appreciate in this sense. Since modern Russian paintings are explained there more broadly, I would ask you to read it for your reference.

Consequently, the publishing situation in Japan regarding the literature on Russian paintings after I returned from Moscow the first time was slightly different from what I felt at that time, but even if I had known of this encyclopedia then, I would likely still have written this book. The motivation for writing, however, would have had the nuance of taking the next step for introducing Russian art. It goes without saying that taking into consideration the broad meaning which Russian paintings have, it is quite impossible to represent everything by several books. Because of the scarcity of the books or albums devoted to this subject, the attention given to Russian art in Japan is still extremely far from the level it deserves. So I look forward to more of the books on this subject coming out in the future for further changing the situation.

As for the foreword of this book, I asked Peter Ossovsky, a People's Artist of the USSR, to write it. I was given to understand that The State Tretyakov Gallery alone owns more than forty of his works, and a total of nearly 800 pieces are held by Russian art museums on the whole. The reason why I asked him in particular to review for the book is, of course, because this master artist is one of the leading artists in the Russian art world, but also because he was one of the artists who attracted attention to himself due to the style referred to as the “rigid style” at the start of the 1960s in the Khrushchev era.

“Rigid style” refers to the attitude and painting style of only a handful of artists who on each individual base, with exceptional courage, rejected adjusting himself for survival, and worked out his own way in art only by his own ability in the era when the natural trend was to ingratiate oneself with the people in power in full bloom, from which artists, too, were not exempted. A piece by this master artist is introduced in this book (Illustration 36), and his stubborn, sincere personality disdaining any ostentation is

obviously seen in the concise, clear style of this piece. Taking into account his straightforward personality, I expected to get his outspoken criticism of the book.

However, it did not mean that I had confidence in my book, but rather, I strongly wished to know how a first-class Russian artist would look at this book, and when I actually called on him to ask for his review of the book, I felt I was almost trembling with a touch of anxiety as to if my work is worth having the commentary of such an excellent artist. At any rate what I understood from visiting him was that despite his age as old as seventy seven, this master was still hale and hearty, producing his works with strong zeal. At that time, he was in the final stages of preparing for an upcoming one person exhibition. Nevertheless, to my extremely delightful surprise, the book review of his was ready with exceptional speed in two days after I handed him a Russian translation of the manuscript then. My artist friend, who had introduced him to me, later conveyed the message to me that Ossovsky had very much liked my manuscript; he had read it all at one sitting and written out the review the next morning with an intuitive flash. Naturally, this review from such a master brought me confidence and much encouragement, and I'd like to take this opportunity to once again express my sincere gratitude to Peter Ossovsky.

Publishing this book, I decided to include there the manuscript of the lecture as a supplement which I made on the subject of "on Russian paintings" based on the request of Japan Club in Moscow while I was living there the second time. Although there are some overlapping points with the text of this book, I included in it a lot of new items useful for understanding Russian art and these two have a relation to supplement each other. So I would be glad if you will read it together with this book.

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