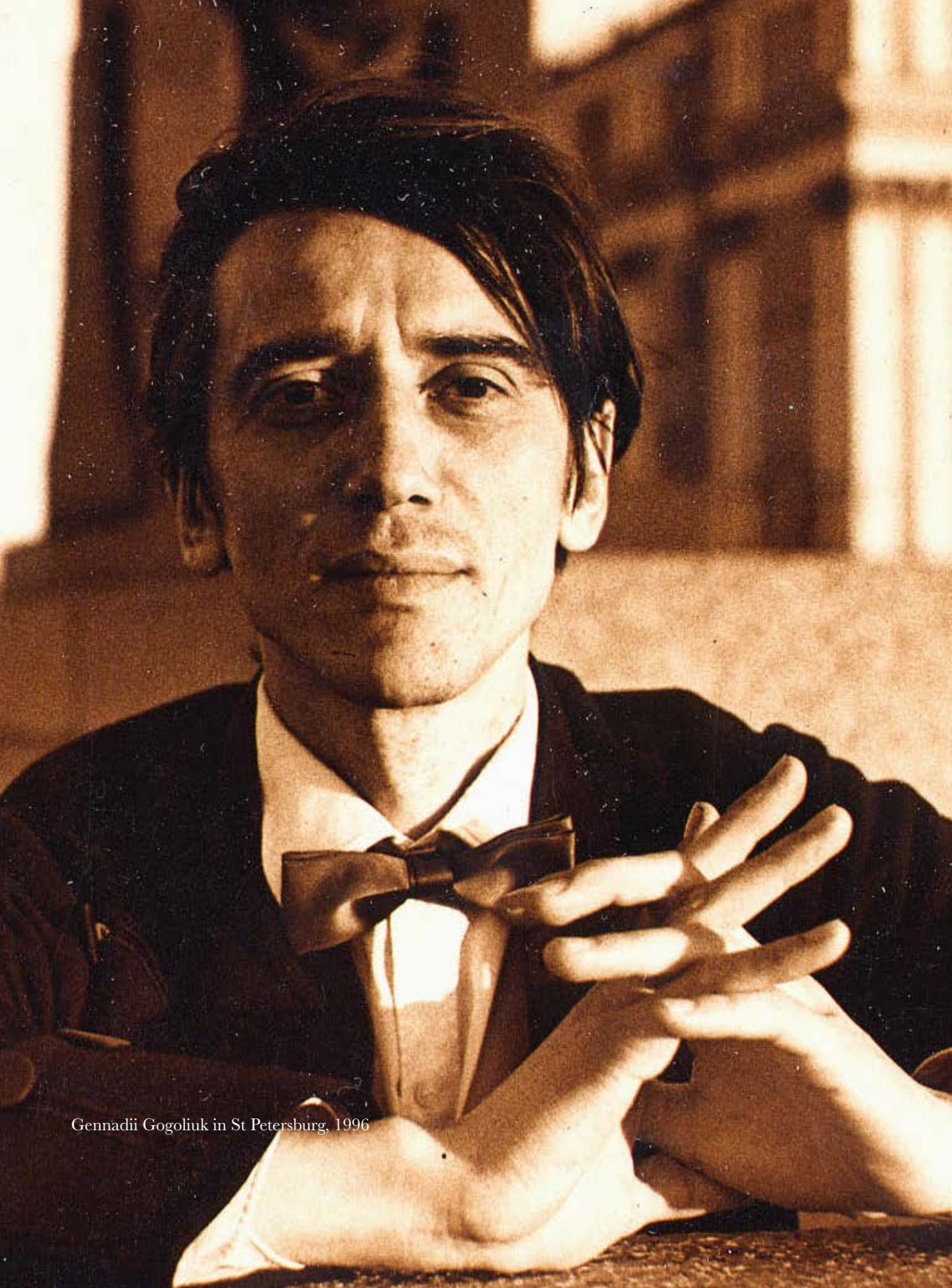


GOGOLIUK  
ZERO SIXTY



Gennadii Gogoliuk in St Petersburg, 1996

*Zero Sixty can be called an exhibition so as not to fall into banality, but leave a riddle. Zero Ten was the name of the exhibition where Malevich put up a black square and changed the story of art. My paintings return to the place of a simple human miracle, or a fairy tale about simple things.*

Gennadii Gogoliuk

GOGOLIUK  
ZERO SIXTY

Paintings & Performance, 1988 – 2020

John Martin Gallery  
London

Mariinsky Theatre  
St Petersburg



1. Evening, Girl Dreaming, 2018  
oil on canvas, 29½ x 23½ ins, 75 x 60 cms



## Foreword

This exhibition started life as a retrospective of paintings planned to coincide with Gena's sixtieth birthday in March. Having worked with Gena over the years I should have known an exhibition could never be that simple and that my suggested title might indeed have fallen "into banality". Instead it became 'Zero Sixty' in homage to the artist, Malevich, a title that also managed to dismiss age itself, letting time slip by as unnoticed as it is irrelevant. It reminded me of my first encounter with Gena's work twenty years ago. 'The Black Monk' (*opposite*), was a small oil painting in a homemade frame, hanging in the cavernous halls of the Royal Scottish Academy and, to my mind, dominating everything around it. It was a fascinating picture, with layers of encrusted paint that suggested an object of great age at odds with a show of contemporary artists. When I finally arranged a visit to see Gogoliuk, he was not the elderly artist I had imagined, but in his forties, living in a small flat with his wife, Rose France, and their young daughter, Lucy, then aged three. And far from a studio filled with a lifetime of work as I had hoped, there were only two canvases, which Rose told me Gennadii would simply repaint every time a new idea came to him, obliterating what was there before. The Black Monk was just a rare survivor of those early years.

As I got to know Gena and Rose, I became fascinated with the story of his rigorous training at the Leningrad Academy, as a scenic painter at the Kirov Theatre (now the Mariinsky) and his role in the avant-garde artistic groups that emerged during the upheavals of Perestroika. It seemed as complex and exciting as any of the great artistic movements of the 20th century and I was delighted when Rose agreed to write an essay describing those formative years and providing an account of his performances and then his return to painting after leaving Russia in 1998. As the scope of the exhibition broadened I was lucky enough to meet Gena's great friend, Professor Yuri Kotelevtsev whose energy and enthusiasm for bringing the show to Russia led to an introduction to Anna Albertovna, Deputy Artistic Director of the Mariinsky Theatre in St Petersburg who will host the show when circumstances allow. To all three, I am immensely grateful.

Like his performances, Gena's painting is a spontaneous act concerned only with the creation of an idea. For him the work of art exists during the process of painting and when finished its future is of little concern, survival is a matter of chance. Those qualities of timelessness and impermanence that characterise his working practice allow Gena to take risks, avoid complacency and make paintings that seem always fresh and full of purpose. Therefore it seems oddly appropriate that this should be an exhibition existing without the customary start or end date; an exhibition that has to exist, for the moment, out of time.

John Martin



2. The Black Monk, 2000  
oil on canvas, 20 x 16 ins, 51 x 41 cms

## Gennadii Gogoliuk, Paintings and Performance 1988-2020

The first picture I ever saw by Gena was a self-portrait. It was precisely painted in oils, a palette of dark brown and grey in a slightly naïve style. The face loomed palely out from the background, the body distorted and the hands theatrically curved. In the fingertips of one hand was a broken matchstick. The second picture I saw was a picture of a seated figure in a pointed hat. As far as I can remember, the outline was precisely rendered, but where the face should have been there was only a tangle of yellow, and white. There was something unsettling in this figure that reminded me slightly of Francis Bacon, but at the same time, the composition had a sense of classical harmony.

These pictures were painted in the early 1990's. At the time, Soviet Russia was in a state of flux and the whole regime, along with a way of life, was collapsing. For some, this was a time of exhilaration and freedom. For many it was a time of catastrophe. People were selling their possessions on the street. Gena told me that his grotesque portraits depicted what he saw around him. They may have been a satirical portrayal of the gangster capitalists, the 'New Russians' who appeared at the time, but equally, they may have been an exploration of inner monsters he discovered in himself and others when material stability vanished overnight.

I met Gena in 1996. At the time, he was living with a group of artists in an apartment on Vasilievsky Island, on a street known as the 'Seventh Line'. On the corner of the building at street level was a red brick shop front with Art Nouveau lamp fittings and green mosaic tiles. This was 'The Pharmacy of Dr Pel', a small part of Imperial Russia that had survived intact through the revolution, the Civil War and the siege of Leningrad. To the left of Dr Pel's elegant store, a door led into a dingy stairwell and a clanking lift that used to fill me with unease though still preferable to climbing the stairs up into the shadows.

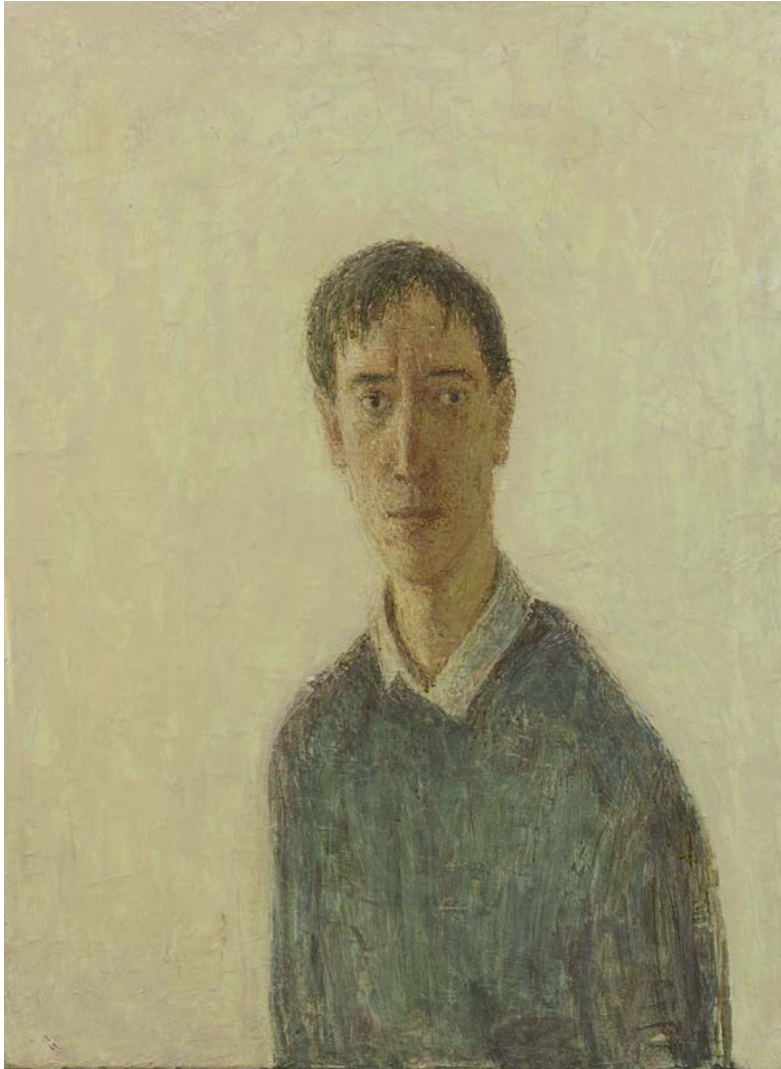
The artists' flat (known by the Italian name of the "mansarda") was at the very top of the building. The darkness of the stairwell was dispelled as soon as you opened the door: it was warm and bright, the floor painted with rust-red paint, worn away in places, and the hall strung with washing lines on which cloths and towels had been hung out to dry. Hanging on the walls were wide, shallow metal bowls and birch twigs for the bathhouse because the apartment had no bathroom. The dining room was almost entirely occupied by one enormous table, so large that there was barely room around the edges for people to squeeze around it. A horizontal forest of dried roses bristled from the wall: flowers brought by visitors, which had been poked into holes in the plaster over the years. A large plaster-cast relief of the Madonna and Child looked down on the gatherings that took place.



Rose France and Gennadii Gogoliuk,  
Moscow 1996

Down in the yard below, overshadowed by the tall houses on all sides, was a strange brick tower about fifteen feet high. Every brick was numbered in white paint. What the structure had been originally was unknown, but the numbers were the work of an avant-garde artist, Alexei Kostroma whose trademark was to cover things in feathers. Gena told me that





3. Self-Portrait, 2001  
oil on canvas, 24 x 18½ ins, 61 x 47 cms

there had been a nest at the very top with a huge egg inside, like the egg of the Roc in ‘The Thousand and One Nights’, but by the time I saw the tower, the egg had gone.

My connection with the flat was my acquaintance with two other artists who had studied with Gena at the Repin Institute of the Academy of Arts, Olga Yukhtina and Oleg Yanushevsky. They had visited Britain, and I had met Olga and seen Oleg’s exhibition in Edinburgh. In 1990 I had visited them in Petersburg when I had been studying in Moscow on my year abroad. At that time, another talented artist, Sergei Sukonkin, had also been living there, but by 1996, when I met Gena, he had left for Britain.

I was an aspiring artist who had become an art school drop-out. Art college in Britain in the late 1980s had been a huge disappointment: there was a sense of apathy and confusion in visual arts, and figurative art in particular was suffering an identity crisis, so I had switched to studying Russian at university. Now, meeting these artists in Russia, it was fascinating to observe what appeared to be a genuine, vital, artistic culture, bred within the state-sanctioned schools of art and retaining its links to the official art world with its prescribed form of Socialist Realism, rather than the unofficial art world, which had always received more attention in the West.

Looking at the work of these artists and speaking to them about it, it was clear that they felt an honour and a privilege to be an artist. It wasn’t a shameful and irrelevant hobby, as seemed to be the case in Britain. The Soviet Union valued its artists because art played such a vital role in the myth-making of the Communist state. The Academy of Arts was very difficult to get into. In Soviet Russia, there was a highly specialised education system, and people who showed talent in art who came from outside the larger cities could be sent to a specialist

boarding school from the age of ten, before going to a college. The Academy offered the highest level of artistic training in the country, and, under the Soviet system, it had been an almost guaranteed passport to a life of privilege and prestige. At the Academy, – at least when Gena studied there – students were trained in the studio of accomplished, “official” artists and therefore almost entirely unknown in the West (Gena had trained under Yevsey Yevseevich Moiseenko). They received a thorough education in anatomy, composition, painting, graphics, monumental art and spent hours copying paintings in the Hermitage.

As far as I could see, they had an awareness of the rules of composition and technique that surpassed anything I had seen in art school at home, as well



Gogoliuk, Rostov Oblast, c.1963



4. Lucy II, 2013  
oil on canvas, 20 x 16 ins, 51 x 41 cms

as a profound understanding of the rules of painting. They also had a clear sense of the importance of continuity with the art of the past, which included not only the painting of the old masters hanging in the Hermitage which they were sent out to copy, but also the pre-classical religious and folk art forms (the fresco, the lubok and the icon) that had influenced the avant-garde artists like Larionov and Goncharova in the period just before the revolution. The Academy gave them membership of an illustrious line of artists that included Vrubel, Korovin and Serov.

As for the abstractionists and innovators, such as Kandinsky, Malevich or Lissitsky, their work was frowned on by the Academy as hooliganism. However, Gena told me that he had been taken on a “closed” excursion for Academy students of the store of the Russian Museum, back in in 1984, accompanied by an expert on Malevich and Filonov, to look at the Suprematist and other avant-garde artworks that were stored there. This trip had given him the chance to see Malevich’s Black Square with his own eyes. The Black Square, I later learned, was something of an obsession for Gena. It both attracted and repelled him, as an extreme gesture that marked a point of no return.

It is impossible for me to judge how things were in the 1970s and 1980s under Brezhnev, but certainly by the time I met Gena, Olga and others, they regarded the interference of the state in their affairs more as a source of humour than hardship. There were numerous jokes and urban legends about the practice of depicting Lenin – which was considered an essential

skill for artists working in monumental art. A typical joke of this sort told of a sculptor with a drink problem who, in his carelessness, created a statue of Lenin with two caps: one on his head and the other in his outstretched hand.



The late 1980s and early 1990s had been a time of transition, when Gorbachev’s glasnost had resulted in the spread of new information and ideas, and a spirit of freedom. By the time I met Gena, he was not painting but was entirely involved in experimental art work. As a result of these experiments he had been thrown out of the Academy several times (which seemed to him as much a point of pride as getting into it in the first place). He had moved into abstractionism, geometric compositions in a glowing palette reminiscent of icons: scarlet, gold, white and black. Later, he made installation work and then performance art - taking part in avant-garde “actions” and performances that were deliberately provocative. He was a member of the performance group Tut I Tam (‘Here and There’) with the German artist Henrich Dantsch and a number of

Poster for ‘After Perestroika’, Burglen (Colbe) 1993. An early abstract by Gogoljuk.





5. Late Spring Flowers, 2016  
oil on canvas, 20 x 16 ins, 51 x 41 cms





‘Tut i Tam’, St Petersburg 1989: Alexei Kostroma, Grigorii Grigorian (standing); Henrik Damsch (seated); Gennadii Gogoliuk

is less cerebral, more provocative, and which harks back to the Russian religious tradition of the Holy Fool or ‘Yurodivy’. Gena’s performances are more closely aligned to this type of art. An early performance in Germany was even called ‘Ascent into Madness’ (Voskhozhdenie v bezumie).

I remember a small poster on the wall in the flat on the Seventh Line. It showed a black and white photograph of Gena’s face staring intensely through a bunch of roses, and above it, the title ‘I Love Pictures’ (Ja Liubliu kartiny). It was clearly intended to be ironic but the poster also told another truth as I knew from all our conversations and from our visits to museums that Gena really did love paintings. I later found out that this picture was in fact part of a performance Gena had done together with Oleg Yanushevsky and Serafim Makangila, called ‘Russkie avantgardisty khorosh soboi’ (literally: Russian Avantgarde artists are good-looking). The event, which took place in 1997, was sponsored by the firm that made Nevskoye beer. The sponsors had laid on a lorry full of cans of beer. An orchestra, perched on the roof of the lorry, played as the lorry drove along from the Russian Museum to Millionaya Street. Gena and Oleg, mounted on a black and a white horse, rode alongside the lorry. In a scene reminiscent of the Bulgakov’s *The Master and Margarita*, Serafim, armed with a spade, tossed free beer down from the lorry to the watching bystanders. The exhibition space was hung with banners bearing absurd slogans in the tradition of the OBERIUTY the avantgarde group from the 1920s, including Kharms and Vvedensky (whose most famous slogan was “My - ne pirogi!” (“We are Not Pies!)). In one room were Gena’s pictures, which at this point trod a fine line between figurative art and abstraction; while in the other room two cooked pig’s heads, also provided by the sponsor, were on display. This was at a time when food was in short supply and as Gena gave an interview to a journalist about his art, the audience set about eating the pigs’ heads, stripping off flesh until only the skulls remained.

By the mid to late 1990s, the need to make a living in a changing society had begun to dominate life in Russia. With the drastic programme of transition to a market economy, the security once offered by the state was being pulled away. Gena and Olga found work

Russian artists, who later formed the ‘Gruppa Rabochego Deistviia’ (Group of the Work Action). Their performances in the Manezh included ‘The Amphibian Man’, ‘Seventh Line, Ready for Take-off’, ‘Black Venus’ and ‘The Universal Man’. He also did some separate, music-based performances with a student from Zaire, Serafim Makangila. Another group, ‘Avant-Post Evropa’, included artists and students of Russian from the UK: Liz Hinton, Guy Pugh and Simon Geoghegan.

Conceptualism had formed part of an alternative underground art scene in the USSR during the 1970s and 1980s in the Soviet Union. In Moscow, artists like Komar and Melamid, Ilya Kabakov and Erik Bulatov made pictures, objects and performances that explored, often in a highly sophisticated fashion, the interaction between ideology and reality in the Soviet Union. There is also a tendency in Russian performance art that



6. Lucy with Lantern, 2018  
oil on canvas, 47½ x 39½ ins, 120 x 100 cms



Performance 'Khokhol Shaman', Manezh St Petersburg, 1996

first time that Gena had worked at the Marinsky: when the theatre was still known as the Kirov Theatre he had worked in the set department, even featuring as an extra in a show, dressed up as a peasant boy and rolling a barrel on stage. At the time, he had had the opportunity to acquaint himself with the impressive original backdrops of famous artists such as Golovin and Korovin.

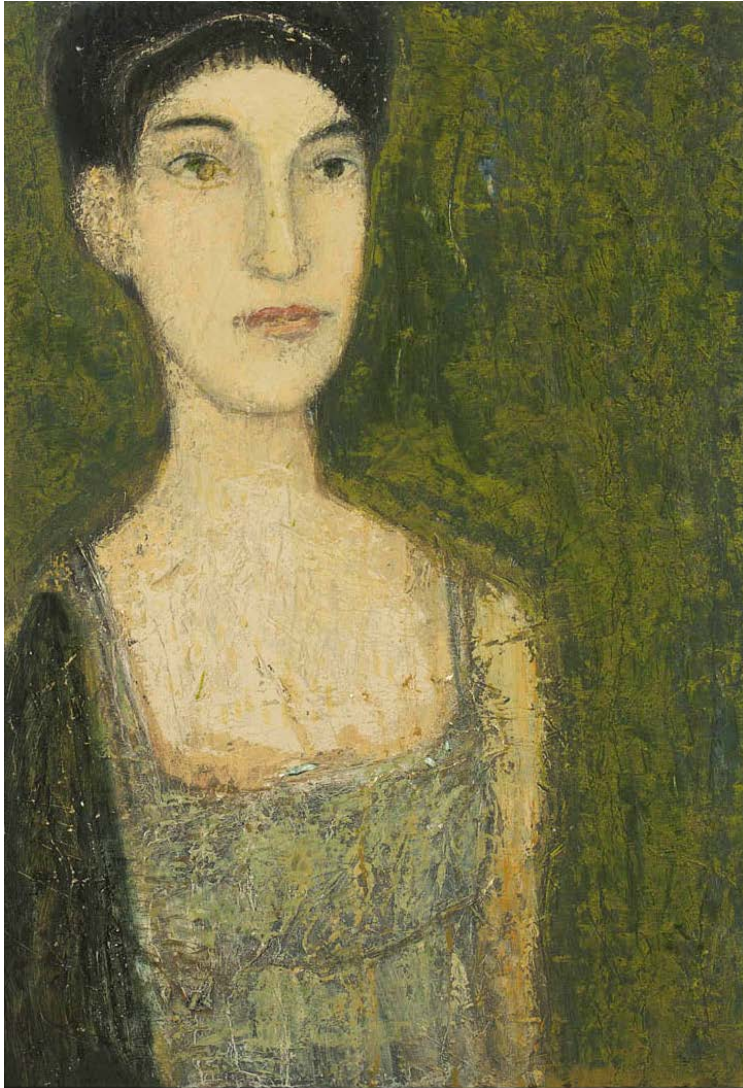
When Gena moved to Edinburgh in 1998, he became entirely isolated from the artistic milieu that had sustained all this experimental work and he began to submit his paintings to the open group shows at the Royal Scottish Academy which at that time were open to anyone. It was through the SSA that John Martin discovered his work and began to exhibit him in his gallery in Albemarle Street in London. It is difficult to underestimate the importance of John Martin in recognising and promoting Gena's work. He has been an unfailing source of support and encouragement and the course of Gena's career would have been very different without him.

At first, Gena's produced small scale works in a rough, naïve manner and a fantastical subject matter. They often featured small, full-size figures with other objects (a balloon, a cockerel, a tuba). As time went on, he became more and more drawn into the process of painting and his work grew in size and sophistication. He began to paint half-figure portraits, in which the head and hands were the focal points. He also occasionally painted still lifes, often of flowers. Gena often talks about still life painting as if it were portraiture, talking about the need to find a character or story in the flowers.

His pictures are a record of the people - real and imaginary - who have been close to him over the years, and with whom he felt a special connection. Some, like Pushkin, Gogol, or Kharms, are famous; some are people whom he respected and people who helped him in Edinburgh (the late Professor Henry Walton, the late Father John Maitland Moir and Richard Demarco); others are family (there are dozens of portraits of his children, and many of my family members too, as well as portraits of his parents and himself). Some portraits have the quality of archetypes - often distinctly Russian, relating to some sort of fantasy Russia. I always see this Russianness as an expression of Gena's own feelings of nostalgia and loss: he lost his country not only once, through the experience of emigration, but twice, due to the pace of transformation that has changed Russia unrecognisably since he left.

Living in Edinburgh, with its yearly arts festival, provided the chance for Gena to spend a lot of time with visiting theatres and theatre directors from Russia. Many of these were brought to Edinburgh

at the Marinsky Theatre under Alexei Popov, painting backdrops for ballet productions. They worked in a large studio at the top of the building. The vast canvas sheets were spread out on the floor, and the artists used what looked like household brooms and large vats of aniline dye. They were reconstructing classic sets by well-known artists: Korovin's *Don Quixote* and Virsaladze's *Nutcracker*. There was a little bridge which stuck out over the floor at a height, like a diving board. This was so the artists could check on the progress of their work from a distance, it was difficult to see how the fairy-tale forest was taking shape at floor level. This was not the



7. Wisdom of the Night, 2011-16  
oil on canvas, 27½ x 19½ ins, 70 x 49 cms





'After Perestroika', Gogoliuk in Colbe, Germany 1993

through the efforts of Demarco, who has always been active in promoting Eastern European talent in the city, and Wolfgang Hoffman, who ran the brilliant 'Aurora Nova' venue. Over the years we have attended many performances and played host to a number of actors and directors including the director Andrei Moguchii, now a prominent figure in the world of theatre in Russia. Over the years, Gena collaborated with some of these performers on stage. Together with former 'Derevo' member Oleg Zhukovsky, he took part in a show in Hungary directed by Attila Vedniansky called Winged Man with Derevo's Tanya Khabarova in a production in Macerata, Italy. More recently, he has been in active collaboration with performers formerly affiliated with Theatre "Do" Irina Kozlova and Sasha Bondarev. Over the last couple of years they have staged a series of performances in Germany on the theme of Buratino – Alexsei Tolstoy's retelling of Pinocchio.

Living with Gena over the years, I have observed first hand his total commitment to his art. His years at the Academy have inculcated a strong sense of artistic discipline in him and he is always at work, no matter where he is. Once, on a hot day during a holiday on the Isle of Mull, when the rest of our party went off to look at the island, he spent all day alone on the beach at Tobermory creating a Mandala from pebbles and sea glass, with interested onlookers offering him cold drinks. Sometimes, his desire to be always working can be detrimental – if he runs out of canvas, for instance, he will think nothing of painting over any picture close to hand. He not only reworks paintings, he will rework entire sketchbooks, until the pages are heavy with layers and layers of paint, scribbling, reworking, painting again and again. And while this sometimes entails the loss of wonderful paintings, it is clearly an essential part of his working practice. In the course of time, his pictures will, eventually be fixed, as if in amber. But as long as he is alive, Gena will do everything he can to keep that from happening.

Rose France  
Edinburgh, March 2020





8. Silence, 2015  
oil on canvas, 20 x 16 ins, 51 x 41 cms



9. The Sorceress, 2008  
oil on canvas, 27<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 24 ins, 70 x 60 cms



10. Lucy, 2009  
oil on canvas, 30 x 20 ins, 76 x 51 cms





11. Girl with Ribbons, 2013  
oil on canvas, 28 x 20 ins, 71 x 51 cms



12. King Over the World, 2018  
oil on canvas, 39¼ x 27½ ins, 100 x 70 cms





13. Sirin, 2011  
oil on canvas, 24 x 20 ins, 61 x 50 cms

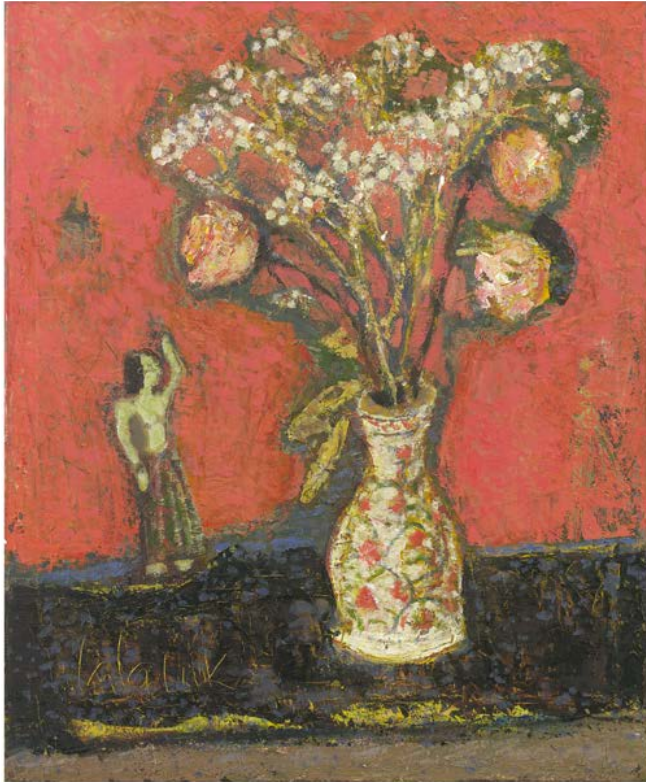


14. Invisible Tears, 2019  
oil on canvas, 27½ x 19¾ ins, 69 x 50 cms



15. Flowers in the Studio, 2015  
oil on canvas, 20 x 16 ins, 51 x 41 cms





16. Untitled, 2019  
oil on canvas, 24 x 20 ins, 61 x 51 cms

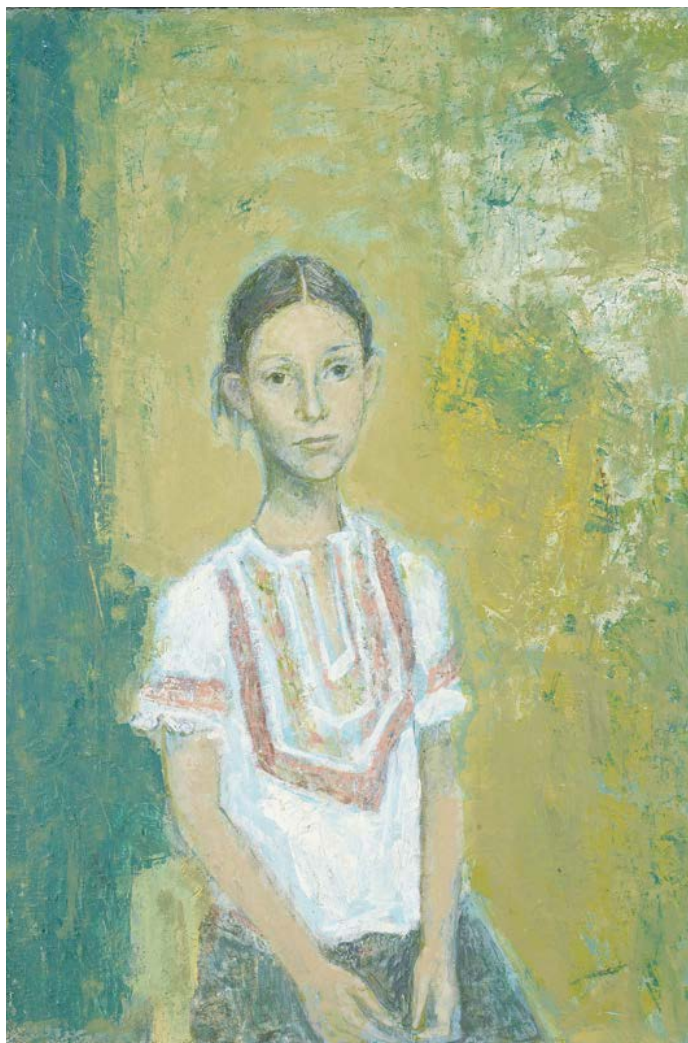


17. Reborn in the Grass, 2019  
oil on canvas, 24 x 20 ins, 61 x 51 cms

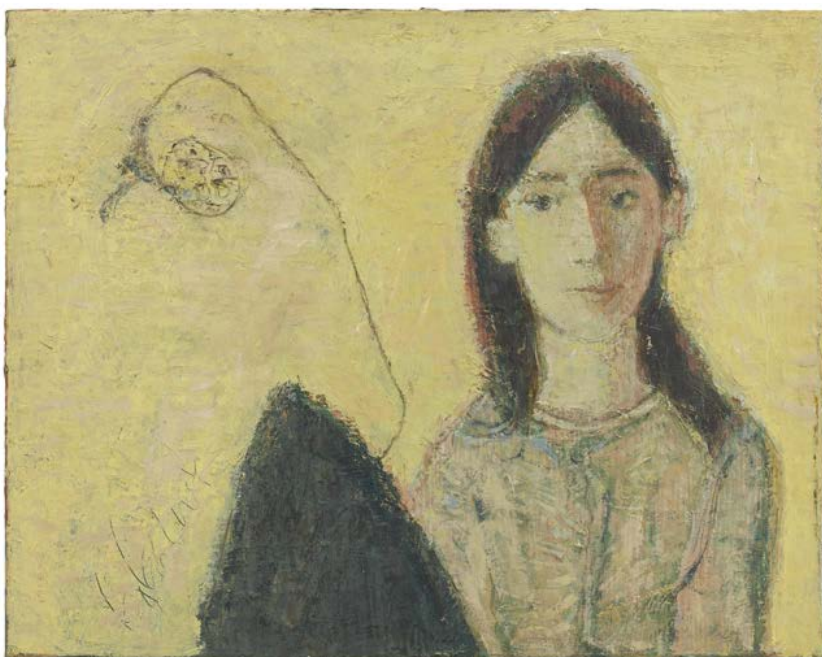




18. Still Life with Lilies, 2015  
oil on canvas, 20 x 16 ins, 51 x 41 cms



19. Lucy Seated, 2008  
oil on canvas, 30 x 20 ins, 76 x 51 cms



20. Flight of Heavens, 2016  
oil on canvas, 16 x 20 ins, 41 x 51 cms



21. Time of the Troubadours, 2011  
oil on canvas, 20 x 16 ins, 51 x 41 cms

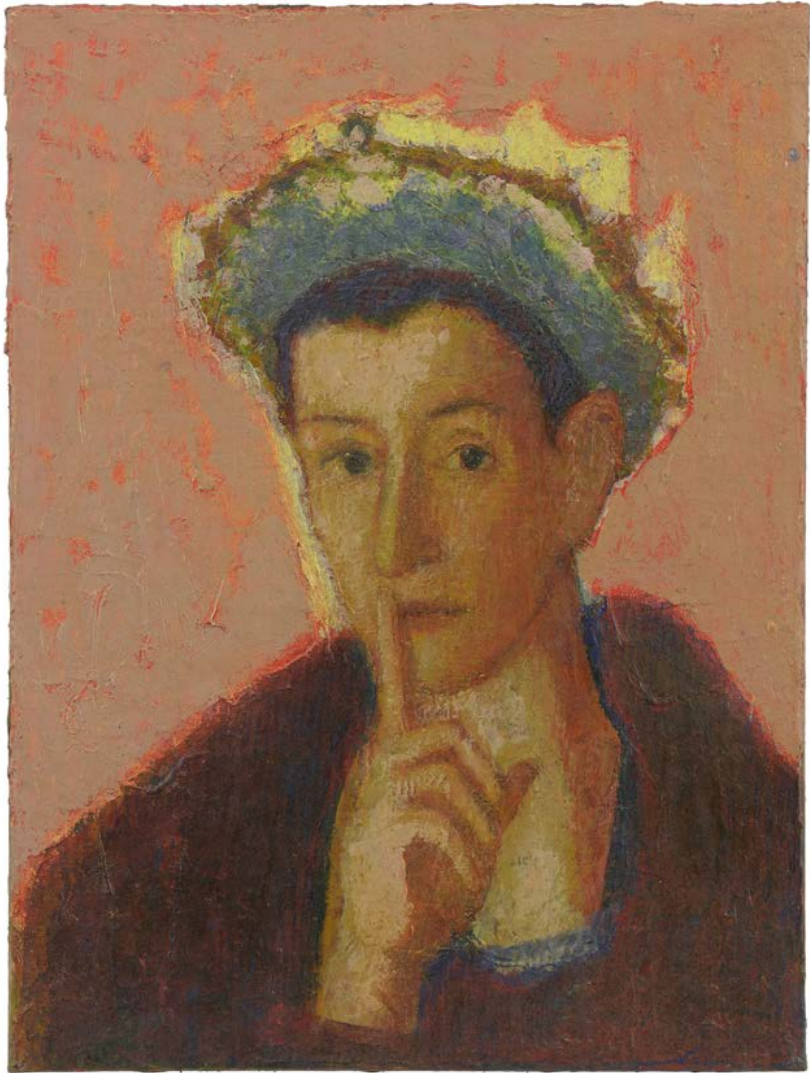




22. Melancholia, 2013  
oil on canvas, 36 x 48 ins, 91 x 122 cms



23. The Hussar, 2003  
oil on canvas, 32 x 40 ins, 80 x 100 cms



24. One Silence in the World, 2019  
oil on canvas, 24 x 18 ins, 61 x 46 cms



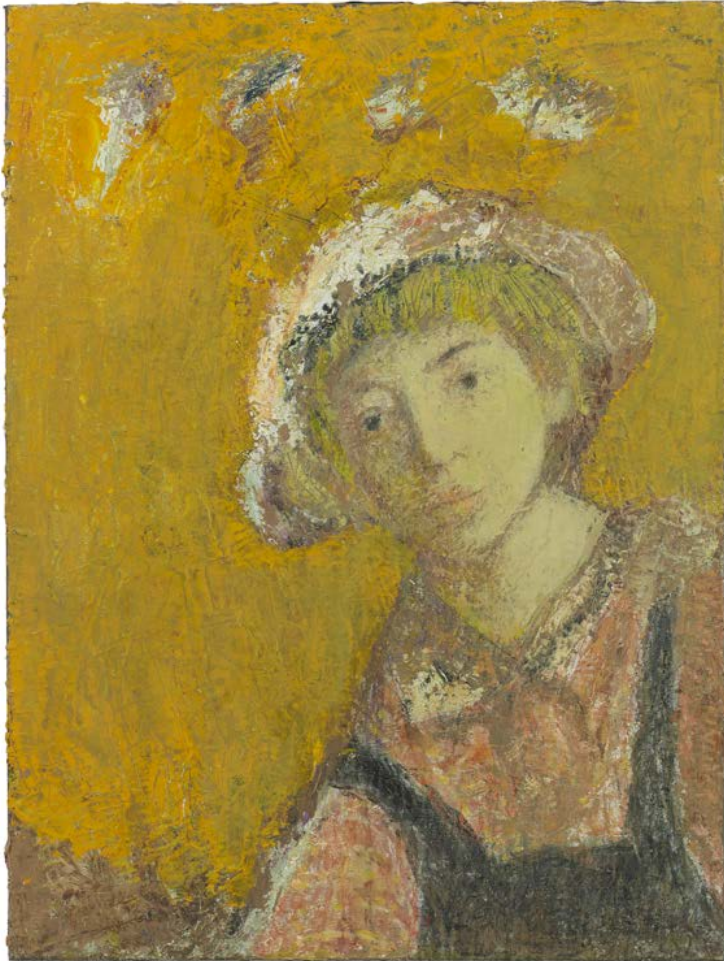


25–30. Studies of Performers, 2019  
gouache on paper, 12½ x 9 ins, 31 x 22 cms





31–36. Studies of Performers, 2019  
gouache on paper, 12½ x 9 ins, 31 x 22 cms



37. And the Clouds Overheard, 2013  
oil on canvas, 24 x 18 ins, 61 x 46 cms

Gennadii Gogoliuk was born in in 1960 in Sholkhov, Rostov Oblast, Russia. He studied at the Lugansk art school in the Ukraine and later at the St Petersburg (then Leningrad) Academy of Art. He worked for several years with the Kirov Theater (now the Mariinsky Theatre) in St Petersburg. In 1998 he moved to Edinburgh.

#### Solo Exhibitions

- 2016 One of Many Worlds, John Martin Gallery, London
- 2015 Heavenly Flowers and Creatures, John Martin Gallery, London
- 2013 Waiting for You, John Martin Gallery, London
- 2011 Shooting Peacocks is Easy, John Martin Gallery, London
- 2009 Gennadii Gogoliuk at The Scotland-Russia Institute, Edinburgh
- 2009 A Thousand and One Mornings, John Martin Gallery, London
- 2007 Silver Threads, John Martin Gallery, London
- 2006 Pursuing the Ideal, John Martin Gallery, London
- 2005 Waves of Time, John Martin Gallery, London
- 2003 On the Edge of Things, John Martin Gallery, London
- 1993 Solo Exhibition, Heimatmuseum, Burgeln, Germany

#### Group Exhibitions & Performances

- 2019 'Buratino Bouffe', Performance with Irina Kozlova and Sasha Bondarev, Teatr Acut, Berlin
- 2014 'La Pushkin' Avant Garde Theatre, Masterclass, Director Oleg Zhukovsky, Novosibirsk, Russia
- 2009-10 'Winged Man', Director, Attila Vidnyánszky, Csokonai Theatre, Debrecen, Hungary / Volkov International Theatre Festival, Yaroslavl, Russia
- 2000 RSA Annual exhibition, Edinburgh. Awarded Maud Gemmell Hutchinson Prize
- 1996 GAM - performance by three artists, Baltic Theatre, St Petersburg  
Performance, 'The First Exhibition of the Cow' (named in honour of the artist K Korovin), Central Park of Culture, St Petersburg  
Third Biennial Exhibition of St Petersburg Artists, Manege Exhibition Halls, St Petersburg
- 1995 Joint exhibition of Russian artists, Modern Art Section, Russian Museum, St Petersburg
- 1994 'Frozen Pictures' - installation, Ship of Arts Project, Stubnitz, Rostok, Germany
- 1993 'Frog' - performance as part of Three Nights Event, Slava Polunin's Academy of Fools Theatre Centre, St Petersburg
- 1992 'Ascent into Mindlessness', performance as part of 15 St Petersburg Artists, Kunstforum, Bonn, Germany  
'Reflexio', Tut I Tam group, St Petersburg  
'Beating Rembrandt' - performance as part of Garderop, Manege Exhibition Hall, St Petersburg
- 1991 Festival of Arts, Aarhus, Denmark
- 1990 Joint exhibition of international artists, Turku, Finland
- 1989 Joint exhibition of St Petersburg Artists, Union of Artists, St Petersburg
- 1988 White Nights in Leningrad, Union of Artists, Leningrad
- 1987 All-Union, Manege Exhibition Hall, Moscow
- 1986 Exhibition of 'unofficial' artists, Baltic Theatre, Leningrad

Printed for the exhibition  
Gennadii Gogoliuk, *Zero Sixty, Painting and Performance, 1988–2020*  
at John Martin Gallery, London  
and the Mariinsky Theatre, St Petersburg  
Dates to be confirmed and opening hours will be subject to prevailing  
Government guidelines. Please check website for details.

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