

# Bulgarian Encounters - a cultural romp

Ronald G Young



Boris Denev (1889-1969)

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Nenko Balkanski (1907-1977)

## Acknowledgements

I would not have been able to produce the core of this book without the support and encouragement of the following people who have become good friends -

**Yassen Gollev** of Konus Gallery - also painter and lecturer. who helped me compile (in 2009 or thereabouts) a pencilled list of the classic Bulgarian painters; to whose gallery I would repair proudly clutching some find; and where I would be rewarded with good conversation and a glass of choice rakia!

**Yovo Yovchev** was the artist who really introduced me to Bulgarian painting in 2008; who sold me my first Bulgarian painting; subsequently helped me in my searches; and served great meals and wines in his studio!

**Vihra Pesheva** of Astry Gallery which is a haven for particularly living artists (old and young) whose work gets such excellent treatment from her creative spirit. Another place I am always assured of a warm welcome.

The website and auction catalogues of [Victoria gallery](#) and **and auction house** have played an important role in my education about Bulgarian realists. The website contains a great archive of photographs as well as brief information about some of the painters. The photographs in this book and on the CD Rom have four basic sources - the Victoria Gallery; municipal galleries; my own shots of paintings; and the internet (eg [ArtPrice.BG](#)). Details of these websites are given in relevant sections of the booklet and I gratefully acknowledge their use.

The publications of some of the municipal galleries have also been useful in filling out the information on painters given in section nine - particularly the bilingual material produced by **Sofia City Gallery**.

Inevitably, some errors will have occurred in the dates given for key events in painters' lives - for which I have to assume complete responsibility. Ditto for the whimsical section on history.....

## DEDICATION

To my daughter Jan and my son-in-law Pete – in the hope that they will enjoy their taste of Sofia.....in their own way.....

It was Jan whose example inspired me to set up my blog and started me on this venture of [Balkan and Carpathian Musings](#)

And to Daniela for her patience, love and editorial support – particularly for chapter 2 and the restructuring of (and additions to) subsequent chapters written in response to her comment about the “overwhelming” nature of the lists ..... .

To enter into the subjective life of another culture – its symbolic codes, its overt beliefs and implicit assumptions – requires, as any immigrant or nomad can tell you, a considerable effort of consciousness and imagination; a kind of stretching of self towards the other- and a gradual grasp of differences which are sometimes imperceptible and subtle. ....

Cultures are neither static nor monolithic organisms – they are complex, changeable and internally diverse. What is considered healthily assertive in one culture may be seen as aggressive or hostile in another; certain kinds of personal disclosure which may seem quite unproblematic in one society may be seen as embarrassing or entirely unacceptable elsewhere.....

We live in a world in which various kinds of cross-national movement – migrations, travel, various kinds of both enforced and voluntary nomadism – are ever on the rise...

If we are to meet with each other on the basis of trust rather than tension or insidious indifference, we need to have ways of getting acquainted with each other which are more than cursory, or purely instrumental. But how can this be accomplished?

What kind of knowledge is needed to feed meaningful cross-cultural contacts?

[Inner Lives of Cultures](#) (2011) ed Eva Hoffman

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**Who? Me?**

# 1. Ways of Seeing - Not your usual Guide!

Sofia has offered me a base since mid 2007 - I have one foot there and the other in Romania. I've never found it easy [to use a noun to explain how I earned my living](#) - having generally to resort to verbs such as "analysing institutions" or "writing reports" - but art has never figured as a professional activity. It's simply something that crept up and hit me while I was living in Bulgaria.

But now I have become a collector of Bulgarian art and, through that, more and more curious about aspects of Bulgaria's culture and history. This painting is one of three superb seascapes I have of the Black Sea - by one Petar Boiadjiev about whom my searches can unearth no trace!! He's one of 200 artists listed in the book and great proof for me of the richness of the Bulgarian tradition.



It was apparently Benjamin Disraeli who suggested that "*the best way to become acquainted with a subject is to write a book about it*" and Henry James who asked "*How can I know what I think until I read what I have written?*"

Because perhaps of its size - or its Cyrillic script and language - Bulgaria has a low global profile although the Black Sea sands and red wine have long been known to the British public; and its ski slopes to younger travellers. A few retired people have also been amazed by the richness of its monasteries...

Apart, however, from a handful of travel books, very little is easily available in English about the country.....a few modern novels....When my youngest daughter visited me here in October 2013, I could offer her only my little booklet with brief notes on 140 painters, a few reproductions and a CD. Since then, however, my trips to the antiquarians have paid rich dividends and the weight of the art books indeed brought a shelf crashing down on my fingers not so long ago.

And the prospect of my oldest daughter's visit helped open up more internet riches.....particularly historical

So, as the conclusion notes, "a little list" which became a booklet has become a book (if you count the blogposts) - written by someone who has come to love walking the streets of central Sofia.....visiting galleries and bookshops... eating its food ....and drinking its wines and spirit It makes no attempt to offer any guidance about places to visit - that is the staple fare of the guidebooks and tourist guides which can be easily accessed (many with hyperlinks) at section 3.1

Last year my E-book [Mapping Romania - notes on an unfinished journey](#) suggested 16 different ways which can be used to throw light on one of the two countries which I now count as home. These were -

- travel guides;
- travelogues - which can be divided into the serious or the (sadly increasing number of) tongue-in-cheek type;

- histories - dealing with what are considered to be the key events in the shaping of a nation;
- novels;
- social and cultural histories (including jokes) - which give insights into how ordinary people lived their lives;
- memoirs and diaries - dealing with those who were more "distinguished";
- blogs of ex-pats;
- magazines;
- television, films and plays;
- photographs;
- paintings and caricatures;
- buildings;
- conversations and encounters;
- friendships;
- music;
- food and wine

It is in this same spirit that this book is offered - although it does not pretend to have quite the range of the earlier book. Bulgaria, after all, has only one third of its neighbour's population whose journalists and academics (numbered in the tens of thousands) therefore write so much more! It is, therefore, more difficult to find material on some of these subjects.....

The booklet I produced in 2012 on the Bulgarian Realist painters who so impressed me when I first started to live there had less than 50 pages and listed 140 painters and various galleries....The list has now grown to 200 - as has the number of pages....*with the focus broadening somewhat* .. the second part of the book takes the form of selected diary entries in my journey through different aspects of Sofia and Bulgaria - past and present.

I have lived in Sofia on and off since summer 2007; have a mountain house in the Romanian Carpathians; and blog regularly - not least about Bulgarian paintings. I do therefore have some terms of comparison - which strengthen my conviction that Bulgaria has something very special to offer the visitor.

The section on painting starts after page 40 and doesn't pretend to be a comprehensive guide to the painters who have been active in Bulgaria in the past 100 years. There are so many painters that that would be a difficult task even for a Bulgarian! Its purpose is rather

- to give a sense of what "realist" (as distinct from abstract) Bulgarian painters of this period offer
- to encourage visitors to Bulgaria to visit both the private and municipal art galleries - where, as a foreigner, you are generally received as a VIP;
- and to inspire you to make your own discoveries and purchases.

As the quotation on the dedication page indicates, I have become increasingly fascinated by the question of how we might attempt to penetrate the soul of a country....

Not for nothing does my visiting card bear the rubric "Explorer and aesthete"!

Serious studies on countries tend to be written from the perspective of one particular academic discipline - be it history, economics, politics.

Anthropology seems to offer more eg [The anthropology of Ireland](#). And this series on the [cultural history of cities](#) is quite excellent.

Painting is a good "handle" on a country - Peter Robb's [Midnight in Sicily](#) gives a "food and Mafia" take on that country; [Simon Winder's "Germania"](#) and [Neil McGregor's "Germany; memories of a nation"](#) cultural takes on Germany.

Let's start with a brief outline of some important things any visitor should know about Bulgaria -

## 2. A Very Short and Quick Introduction to the Basics

### 2.1 First Impressions

Most signs are in Cyrillic - and it's worth learning the letters of the Cyrillic alphabet in order to understand what trade is being carried out by the various small shops. Suddenly the world begins to make sense again! "Хотдор" is one of my favourites!

Public transport in Sofia is fantastic; and improving all the time. For 4 euros you buy a "talon" of 10 tickets which gets you on any bus, tram or trolleybus (but only for yourself - don't tear another ticket for anyone travelling with you - if caught, you face a fine! So spend 10 leva for the flexible talon). The incredible new metro has its own tickets which, however, offer only single trips - not return!!!!

When people shake their head, they're actually agreeing! Unless (the younger ones) they're smart and fast enough to react appropriately when they realise you're foreign! This makes for some confusion since - in order to interpret the response - you have to make a quick decision about which genre of Bulgarian you're dealing with!!

All educated young Bulgarians speak good English - although their parents have had to make a lot of (unofficial) payments to get them into the right schools, universities and jobs

IT skills are amongst Europe's best - as befits a country which in the 80s and 90s was one of the world's global video and CD pirates

### 2.2 Some key events any visitor should know of

"Cyrillic", you should know, refers to [one of two "Greek" monks](#) (the other is Methodius) who invented the Cyrillic alphabet and language. The adjective is in parenthesis simply because territory (let alone history) has been hotly-disputed in the Balkan area - to put it mildly.

Boundaries have been constantly adjusting.....and are still disputed - particularly those of Macedonia ....from whose loins, remember, both Alexander the Great and Attaturk sprang!  
I liked this quote from a book written in 1931 (Meet Bulgaria)



*Bulgaria has changed its size and shape many times during the last century, stretching out and contracting like an agitated amoeba — if that famous animal ever gets agitated. Many official and unofficial bodies and individuals have drawn Bulgaria's boundaries. The unofficial maps have been prepared in professors' studies or in diplomatic chancelleries and have always been comparatively large. The official maps have been traced on battle fields with bayonets and in most cases have been small and much hacked up. The one which Bulgaria is now wearing is among the most shrunken she has ever had to squeeze into and the whole nation complains that it is entirely too little — that it doesn't fit at all. It was presented to her in Paris somewhat over a decade ago and is of the same general style as those worn by Germany, Austria and Hungary. I am disclosing no secret when I say that there is no Bulgarian who believes that the map making season in the Balkans is closed.*

(These days, however, it is only Greece which queries Macedonia)

The Bulgarians are very proud that they gave Russia its language

And that they had in fact a vast Empire - indeed two!

The [First Bulgarian Empire](#) existed from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> Century and was the dominant power in the Balkans during this period - particularly under Tsar Simeon.

The [Second Bulgarian Empire](#) existed (roughly) from 1200 - 1400. This may have been the "dark ages" for Europe - but incredible remnants of that period are being discovered every month still in Bulgaria



Although Sofia - Roman "Serдика" (and Europe's second oldest city) - was not then its capital which was, variously, in Pliska, Skopje and Veliko Tarnovo

But before that there was, of course, the.....Roman Empire many remnants of which can be found both in Sofia and along the Danube (a strong frontier) particularly Svishtov.

The Ottoman Empire then blotted Bulgaria out for some 450 years

The Orthodox Monasteries kept the religious flame burning - even although their churches were often (literally) forced underground.

It was the Russians who came to Bulgaria's rescue in the 1870s - with hundreds of thousands of Russian soldiers dying in the battles against the Turks which took place in central and eastern Bulgaria

Turkish atrocities aroused European - even British - reactions....

After the Liberation, the country then enjoyed a few decades of "modern bourgeois development"



A wonderful "Revivalist" style of architecture sprung up - remnants of which can still be seen - particularly in Plovdiv and 3-4 villages. Literature and particularly painting flourished. Remember that, until now, the painting of images was forbidden. No wonder that Bulgarian painting exploded in colour at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century!

Churches - even in remote villages - vibrate with almost [erotic pastelling sensibility](#) - and look at the interior of Alexander Nevsky Cathedral whose architect was a Russian, painters Bulgarian but which paid tribute to the Russians, Romanians and Bulgarians who had lost their lives in the struggles of the previous decades...

Things started to go wrong in 1913 when, as part of a complicated series of diplomatic alliances initially against the remnants of the Ottoman Empire, the Balkan countries first [united with one another in a first Balkan War; and then tore each other apart a few months later](#) in a Second Balkan War. Bulgaria lost territory in that second Balkan War.

Overlooking their historic hatred of the Turk and past allegiance to Slavic Russia, Bulgaria entered the [Great War in 1915](#) on the side of the Central Powers with the single objective of reversing the territorial settlements of the 1912-13 Balkan Wars

*A nation of less than five million, Bulgaria mobilized an army of 1.2 million soldiers. These troops helped force the Serbian Army to abandon their own country, drove the French and British expeditionary forces back to the Salonika perimeter, participated in the defeat of Rumania, and, for the last year of the war, were the principal sentinels at the Balkan "back door" into central Europe. But playing a major role in a world war proved exhausting for the small country.*

*By the spring of 1918 food shortages become severe at home and Bulgarian troops had to subsist on a barley bread with straw filler. On 29 September 1918, after their forces collapsed under pressure on the Salonika Front, Bulgaria became the first Central Power to sign an armistice. In three years of war the Bulgarian forces lost a quarter of a million men killed, wounded, or captured.*

The Dobrudja area to the south-east of the Danube was ceded to Romania (being returned in 1945)

The aftermath to the Great War saw a [period of great instability](#) - with bombings and assassinations, culminating in [a coup-d'etat in 1923](#) and also 1932.

A nice little article on [Modernism in Bulgarian Architecture](#), however, shows the more stable side..

Bulgaria was technically neutral at the start of the second world war - but did sign a treaty in 1941 which allowed Hitler's troops to cross the country to conquer Greece; and then declared war on the US and the UK

From 1941-44 Sofia was, therefore, bombed very intensively by the Americans and Brits; about a third of the old centre was destroyed

Bulgaria's honour is saved by [their protection of the Jews](#) from Nazi extermination

As if the century had not been vindictive enough, what happened on and after [9 September 1944](#) was quite traumatic.... This is [how Wikipedia tells the story](#)

*On 26 August 1944, the government had orally declared Bulgaria's neutrality in the war under the threat of the Red Army's offensive in neighbouring Romania. A government of the [Bulgarian Agrarian National Union](#) (BANU) "Vrabcha 1", until then in opposition, was formed on 2 September 1944, headed by Konstantin Muraviev. It continued the peace talks, declared its support for democratic reforms and ordered the withdrawal of German army troops from Bulgaria. At the same time, the guerilla actions of the partisans did not cease, the alliance with Germany was not disbanded and no attempts were made to normalize the relations with Moscow, forcing the Soviet Union to treat the new government with suspicion. On 5 September 1944, the Soviet Union declared war on Bulgaria.*

*On 5 September, the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Workers' Party and the general staff of the Popular Liberation Revolutionary Army commenced the planning of a coup d'état. The plan was further detailed on 8 September. According to the plan, the coordinated actions of the partisans, the BWP combat groups and the pro-Fatherland Front army detachments would assume power and effective control of government during the night of 9 September. The stated goal of the coup d'état was the "overthrowing of the fascist authorities and the establishment of popular-democratic power of the Fatherland Front".*

Nobody knows how many Bulgarians lost their lives in the first weeks of the "people's democracy," their only crime being their political opinion or their social position. However, the number of victims of the so-called People's Court, which was created to give legitimacy to the murder of politicians, artists, writers and even physicians considered "dangerous" to the new regime, is well documented. From December 1944 to April 1945 the court issued 9,550 verdicts, with 2,680 death sentences and 1,921 life terms - the Nuremberg Trials against top Nazis issued just 17 death sentences.

*If you are looking for a single day when the Bulgarian political class was decimated with one blow, you get 1 February 1945. On that day the People's Court sentenced to death 67 MPs and 22 ministers who had held office between 1940 and 1944, including the former prime ministers Dobri Bozhilov and Ivan Bagryanov. Also killed were the regents Prince Kiril, Bogdan Filov and General Nikola Mihov, nine secretaries to the palace, publishers and journalists of national newspapers, and 47 generals and senior military.*

*The victims of the People's Court are just a fraction of the number of Bulgarians who suffered various forms of repression during Communism. Between 1944 and 1989 thousands of opponents of the regime were detained, interned or denied education or work advancement. The reasons for the repression were many and varied: accusations – usually bogus – of espionage and plotting against the Communist state, or opposing the forced collectivisation of agricultural land, or disagreeing with the Bulgarianisation policies toward the country's Muslims. Telling political jokes, wearing mini-skirts, having a "bourgeois" past or the "wrong" relatives could all land you in a labour camp. So could listening to Elvis Presley music. The total number of those repressed between 1944 and 1990 is estimated at about 300,000.*

Although conditions eased in the 1970s, two events in the late 1980s are etched in Bulgarian people's minds -

- The unforgivable silence of the authorities after the Chernobyl nuclear accident in 1987 which resulted in hundreds of deaths and malformations in the country in subsequent years
- The [treatment of the old muslimised ethnic population \(Pomaks\)](#) who in the late 1980s were pressured to take Bulgarian family names. Many left for Turkey but others eke out a living in small villages in the south



Bulgaria had a rather slow and quiet response to the fall of the Berlin Wall with the communists being very slow to relinquish power.....there's a [little article](#) here about that

In its place came lawlessness - I remember even in 2002 being issued by the border authorities at the Danube with a leaflet warning me not to stop my car for policeman on the roads - on the basis that they would probably be hijackers.....By 2007 this was a thing of the past...

And no heads fell for [the iniquities of the communist rule](#) - indeed many people nowadays are nostalgic for those days....

The country has experienced serious emigration of its best and brightest. The population has fallen [from 9 million to less than 7 million](#) in the last 20 years

The judicial system is still unreformed... and corruption rampant ....here's the [latest EC report on all that](#). Friends who try to win EU Structural Fund contracts tell me that 20% "under the counter" payments are needed for the privilege....when they phone to inquire about bids they are often told not to bother as the bid outcome has already been sorted out by the key players....

Bulgarians love their countryside - some parts of which they [endow with mystic qualities](#). They are also great fans of faith healers and remedies. Sofia has quite a few vegetarian shops and restaurants - with fantastic fresh brown bread!!!

I comment later that the country seems to have produced more painters per head of population than most others - I doubt whether it would be possible to produce such a list of Scottish painters! And I have slowly realised the same is true of sculptors - whose artistry I have only recently begun to appreciate. I haven't found a good resource yet about them on the internet - but [here is a little booklet](#) on some modern sculptors.

There is a great tradition in ceramics which is kept alive by contemporary artist - old and young. They have a freshness which you don't often see. Central Sofia has many delightful small shops [displaying their wares](#) - [even online](#). Carpets too....

### 3. Guidebooks, Websites and Videos....

The quotation on the dedication page poses the critical question - "What kind of knowledge is needed to feed meaningful cross-cultural contacts?" but then fails to mention the linguistic barrier - and what this contributes to our understanding (or rather lack of it!) of a country like Bulgaria.

Just as the google search engine effectively whitewashes our previous generation out of existence even in our own country, so the English language is a powerful sieve which excludes a lot of human experience from our sight.....

Initially only the small [Concise History of Bulgaria](#) was the only history book about Bulgaria I could find listed there in the English language (although [Wikipedia has a long and useful note](#) on the various phases of its history). In Sofia, however, I came across a friendly and aesthetically-pleasing history of Bulgaria "Rose of the Balkans" by Ivan Iliev (500 pp; Colibri 2005).

The Lonely Planet website [could list in 2010 as books worth reading](#) only the 1888 novel "[Under the Yoke](#)" and other novels on the same theme of war with the Turks - and books about gypsies! I found [a rather fuller list here](#) - but all this paled into insignificance once I enrolled the help of the [National Library of Scotland's website](#) and punched "Bulgaria".....

It is of course exceedingly boring for fathers to hold forth on cultural aspects of a country - so I will simply list the books I've had the time and opportunity to collect on my strolls around Sofia's streets.....and let your fingers do the roaming..... It may look a manageable list but I warn you that there is an incredible wealth of material trapped below "them there.....clicks"

Just remember that the underlined titles give, for the most part, links - very often to an entire book!! Don't tell me this site does not give value-for-money!!!!

*And italicised titles give no links!*

#### 3.1 Guidebooks for Bulgaria I recommend include -

- [The Rough Guide to Bulgaria](#) which does contain (at page 461-64 of the link) a list of English books on Bulgaria (but many are out of print) as well as a useful section on the country's music.
- A locally-produced [Bulgaria Tour Guide](#) (Tangra 2006) - a glossy 670 pager with superb small illustrations - is a great buy at only 15 euros.
- [Bulgaria - discover the real Bulgaria](#) (Other Places Travel Guide) by Leslie Strnadel and Patrick Erdley (2012) - not so easy to find since it is a Peace Corps publication. The link is a googlebook one and therefore offers a good read in itself.
- The [Vagabond journal](#) produced by Anthony Georgieff is now publishing superb perspectives into different aspects of the country and its past with great photos and then collecting them in coffee table books eg [Hidden Treasures of Bulgaria 2](#).
- [100 Bulgarian National Tourist Sites](#); by A and S Dermendziev (2013) Bulgarian and German only
- *The Danube Riverside Guide* (2011 - one of several regional guides produced by Tangra Publishing)
- *Bulgarian Monasteries* (2004) by [Nikolai Touleshkov, Lyuben Prashkov Ivan Bozhilov](#) Bilingual. Great guide.

- [Companion guide-to-religious-architecture-in-bulgaria-part-one-west-bulgaria](#); J Mineva-Milcheva and E Alexandrova-Koeva (2006) Thorough 460 page analysis of the key features of a small part of the incredible heritage
- This delightful little E-book features some of the [amazing small bed and breakfasts in the countryside you can stay at for a song](#).

Of course, if you look really hard, you can find treasures -

- Ivan Daraktchiev's amazing [Bulgaria: Terra Europeansis Incognita](#) - 600 pages of superb photographs and provocative (English) text about the history (ancient and recent) and landscape of the country and its relationship with neighbours.
- The owner of Sofia's Neros Gallery, Ruhmen Manov, went one better in summer 2014 by giving us a bilingual [A Fairy Tale about Bulgaria](#) which weighs in at 7 kilos and 700 pages - based on his personal collection of old Bulgarian photos and cultural artefacts. It does indeed give a stunning sense of Bulgaria's more recent history.
- the 600 page [Sofia's Mount Athos](#) by Valentina Sharlanova (Drinov Academic Publishing 2013) is a superb study (complete with photos and GPS coordinates) of the 46 monasteries which cluster around Sofia - many since the 14<sup>th</sup> century.
- "*The Architecture of the Old Bulgarian Villages*"; Stefan Stamov (2006) 350 pages written by the doyen of Bulgarian writers on architecture. Bilingual
- [Wooden Folk Houses](#); Stefan Stamov (2007) 375 pp Unfortunately only in Bulgarian but full of delightful black and white photos of village houses.....

*The wooden house represents a source of knowledge not only of the oldest history, architecture and construction, but also of the life, culture and artistic traditions the Bulgarian people. Very often timbered houses mix with wooden frame-built houses. This study examines that house where the residential part is built only of wood, i. e. the floors, walls, ceilings and roofs are of wooden beams and planks. When the house becomes two floors, foundations, basement parts of or the entire ground floor is built of stone, but the floor in the living process that takes place - bedrooms, kitchens, balconies, is just wood. If the ground floor has living quarters, they are also made of wood - the inside is coated with shingle, and the walls of the courtyard or the street are planks.*

- *The Bulgarian Contribution to the World Cultural Heritage* (Sofia 1989) - one of the books unearthed by the guy who runs the tiny second hand bookshop in the courtyard of 86 Vasil Levski St. It's a detailed account of The Kazanluk Thracian Tomb; the Madara Horseman; the Boyana Church; the Ivano Rock Churches near Russe; the ancient city of Nessebur and Rila Monastery.
- *Medieval Melink - from the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century to the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century*; Elena Kostova (American Research Centre 2013)
- *Rhodoopes; the Sacred Mountain* (Club 8 2014); an absolutely wonderful 245 page photographic tribute to the area - with brief text



### 3.2 Websites

As the owner of two websites, I am now a bit suspicious of the motives which lie behind 99% of websites. They are either commercial or ideological. It's amazing that I realised this only recently when I was setting up my first custom-designed one last year.....In principal, university websites, of course, should be free of such pressures but, in practice, the neo-liberal push has perhaps affected them even more.....

However the websites offered here are, for the most part, tourist information sites about which we are (like estate agents) warned in advance!

- [Visit Sofia](#)
- Sofia [City Info Guide](#)
- [Bulgaria Travel](#) - nice site of a typical tourist agency
- [Photo library of the Danube Region](#) - superb resource left from a typical short-term EC project
- <http://danube-raft.eu/category/post-format-gallery/> - ditto
- <http://www.bulgarianmonastery.com/> - a good example (I think) of a public-private venture. Good resource. [Further info and pics here](#)
- [La Belle Epoque](#); the Sofia end of a great website

There's even a [site which identifies Sofia's mounuments](#).....including homes of classical painters...

A dissertation - [The Conformists - creativity and decadence in the bulgarian cinema 1945-1989](#) by one Evgenija Garbolevsky (2011) looks at Bulgarian cinema here during the communist period -

*My research focuses on the development of Bulgarian film between 1944 and 1989, as the youngest and most dynamic medium during the period. I explore several forms of subversion, such as decadence, silence and irony, among others, which fostered the creative imagination of the intellectual elite, and made the film art successful. I search for resilience in the oeuvres, in the operation of the institutions, and by looking at the views of the filmmakers and the works of the film critics.*

*I argue that the Bulgarian filmmakers, similar to their counterparts across the Eastern Bloc, vigorously resisted fitting into the role of lackeys of the Communist regime. Instead, the cineastes articulated their personal visions in their oeuvres by developing aesthetic practices and coded language, expressing their dissatisfaction with the status quo, and communicating their complex political and cultural views to the audiences.*

*The filmmakers eluded censors while including the spectators as accomplices. The tension between rebellion and conformism in the cinematic discourse was intense. Despite the powerfully oppressive cultural policies of the regime, the cineastes succeeded loading their works with subversive messages. Regardless of the ideological straightjacket imposed on them, they sublimated their artistic passions and creative impulses, protested, and mocked the Establishment.*

### 3.3 Videos

The ultimate source, of course, of divine authority these days! Just a few samplers -

- [A walk through the street of Sofia](#) - this should be interesting - it lasts an hour - but is one of the most pointless things I have ever wasted 10 minutes of my life on. Apart from the annoying noise of the trundling camera (??), the video misses everything - indeed walks right past the Nevsky and the Russian churches without showing us a glimpse!!!
- [A glimpse of Sofia](#) - which actually focuses only on churches! Trois points!

- [From Bulgaria with love](#) - very low, boring voice but great singing - BUT AFTER 12 MINS there is a 5 minute section only in bg - then shots of Veliko Trnovo - at 24 mins again only BG about Melnik. Six points!
- [History of sofia](#); this is more like a guide - although the voice grates!! 7 points!
- [Buzludzha communist relic](#); most amazing video of a decaying communist monument at the top of the southern Bulgarian mountains - Huit points!!
- [Are there no happy Bulgarians?](#); wonderful sculpture from a Bulgarian friend Spartak Dermendjiev
- For a rather different perspective try [this video about the Thracians](#)
- There is a great old [Pathe News item](#) on the country here - with such a juicy accent!

### 3.4 Bulgarian Music

The country- and sea-side of Bulgaria is wondrous - as are its grapes and food....But utterly distinctive is [its music](#) - whether vocal or instrumental.

Its [women's singing tradition](#) is positively ethereal - and indeed earned it a place on one of the first satellites circulating the earth! Here's a contemporary [young woman singing a solo](#); and here also [a duet](#). And this looks a marvellous study of the musical tradition -

[Performing Democracy: Bulgarian Music and Musicians in Transition](#); DA Buchanan (2006)

Thanks to the surfing for this section, I came across a group until now unknown to me - Isihia who use a variety of traditional instruments to create a great sound. Here for example is one called [Transfiguration](#). And they are the backing to this [superb photoshoot of rural churches](#)

### 3.5 Photography

Black and white photography is a neglected art-form - masters of the genre were [Ansel Adams](#), Henri [Cartier-Bresson](#), Robert [Capa](#), Robert [Doisneau](#), George [Brassai](#) and [Andrei Kertesz](#).

A book of superb black and white photographs of the period (including delightful shots of the country's best loved painters Nikola Tanev) has taken the breath away of friends I have shown it to. Here is Tanev with an actress friend in 1947 at Sozopol. Others show sculptors working on the monumental work of the period.

The book is edited by [Bulgaria's best photographer Ivo Hadzhimishev](#) who is recognised as Bulgaria's best photographer and recently produced a great monograph - "STOYAN SERTEV (1906 - 1974) AN EPOCH IN BLACK & WHITE"

Stoyan Sertev was actually a musician whose other passion was the camera. His huge archive has kept hundreds of frames from 1939 till the end of his life. He mainly shot works of art and their creators, architectural projects, theatrical and opera performances.

Ivo Hadzhimishev was responsible for an exhibition on his work at the National Gallery late last year (and also the catalogue) and says about the latter:





*"The images that we can see in front of us have passed the test of time - they have emerged from oblivion, and, with them or because of them, a multitude of Bulgarian artists and intellectuals who have left a trace in Bulgarian and European culture have returned and taken their place in the image memory of Bulgaria. These photographs have been lived through. They have been created first and foremost by the heart and spirit - and that is their value!"*



Bulgarian National Radio provided recordings of "Avramov" quartet from the Gold Fund for the audio disc accompanying the edition and Alexander Sertev's family.

The book gives an amazing feel for an era and some of the personalities which dominated it - particularly poignant in view of the traumatic events of that period. The book deserves a higher profile - significant that my friends had never seen a copy.....

I find it so important to have such personal reminders of my favourite artists. It is one thing to see their paintings and some text

about them - quite another to see their photos, particularly if animated - or sometimes better - caricatures!

And I have just opened a flickr account for [some initial shots of my area](#) (authors are allowed to do that!!)

### 3.6 ex-pat bloggers

[Apart from me](#), there only seems one other - [A Letter from the Back of Beyond](#)

## 4. Last Sanctuaries

Sofia is blessed not only with good restaurants and many delightful small art galleries but has several quite excellent bookshops where you can find a lot of English books,

I once called art galleries the [last sanctuaries of originality](#) - I was thinking of the small Sofia galleries not the palaces fronted by wankers which do so much money-laundering globally.....

But, in fact, it is the second-hand bookshops which really deserve that name. Where you can find lovely or rare editions of books for a song - books which have often taken a lifetime to produce and which often have a history, with a handwritten inscription from the 60s.....

Whether the books are technically old or "new", they have arrived on the shelves at the moment I happen on them by a magical process of serendipity. Even the [knigomania chain](#) turns its nose up at trying to market English books with shrieking "in-your-face" piles of the best-seller.

The delightful small [Petr Beron](#) corner shop at 2 Shipman St has an owner with an intuitive feel for what the browser with English tastes might find interesting. I emerged recently with [The Monuments Men](#) (the link gives a typically caustic New Yorker review) and [Why Nations Fail - the](#)

[origins of power, prosperity and poverty](#); which got [a long review here](#). Last week it was with a couple of Bulgarian writers.

[Elephant Bookstore](#) is further along Shipman St - almost at the Grav Ignatieff tram street. Their shelves offer real wonders and, on a recent visit, I couldn't resist a lovely first Edition hardback edition of Gunther Grass's [Peeling the Onion](#) (Harvill Secker 2007); and another great first edition hardback of Misha Glenny's [Dark Market; cyberthieves, cybercops and you](#) (Bodley Head 2011). I had just come - laden with books - from one of my favourite old book dives (particularly for books on 20<sup>th</sup> century Bulgarian art) on Vasil Levski 87, side-on to the massive monument to the Russian soldiers.

It doesn't even have a name (I asked - and got a shrug of the shoulders!). It's off the main Boulevard, hidden down a little passage-way but recognisable by the boxes of books at the corner.



This time I couldn't believe my luck - I emerged with 7 old art books (One on the art of Bulgarian woodcutting) and a 1965 book on Veliko Tarnovo - only 60 euros lighter in pocket....

[Alba Books](#) at 38 Ivan Vazov St lies in between these three and is your archetypical antiquarian bookshop with books piled high and a few art lithographs. When I asked if they had any books in English about Bulgarian history, they unearthed a 1920s edition of a bound version of a pamphlet called *Puritans of the Balkans* - which turned out to

be an account of the work of American missionaries in this part of the world.....

*The Bulgarian Bookshop* ([Българска книжарница](#)) offers new books, just along from the Russian Church at 10 Aksakov St, but has the same jumbled atmosphere with books piled high and threatening to crash to the floor.....

#### 4.1 Travelogues

The Balkans have for the past few centuries been a source of great fascination for west Europeans. For intrepid travellers from the 18<sup>th</sup> century at least, this was the furthest extremity of the world that they could reasonably attempt.....[The Debated Lands](#) by Philip Hammond (2002) looks at about 500 books written by these travellers - first at the motifs of discord, savagery, backwardness and obfuscation which characterise the 19th century British travel books about the area.

"[Danubian Principalities; the frontier lands of the Christian and of the Turk](#)" (1854), for example, is written by a British engineer who found himself in the land just south of the Danube in what is now North-East Bulgaria and offers a view just 20 years before Bulgaria was liberated from the "[Turkish Yoke](#)" There then followed a strand of writing in the late 1920s which, as Hammond puts it, "took the romanticisation into deeper territory - with a revolt against western modernity and mass society -

*From the end of the First World War until the outbreak of the Second, travellers were finding in this previously depraved corner of Europe.... "a peace, harmony, vivacity and pastoral beauty in utmost*

*contrast to the perceived barrenness of the West, and which produced benefits for those weary of modernity that ranged from personal rejuvenation to outright revelation".*

*According to this alternative balkanism, violence had disappeared from the region, savagery became tamed, obfuscation turned to honesty and clarity, and the extreme backwardness that had formerly been the gauge of Balkan shortcoming was now the very measure by which it was extolled. For many travelers, any mystery that did remain around the geographical object became less the marker of a befuddled and dishonest culture than a vital indication of spiritual depth....."*

[Meet Bulgaria](#); RH Markham (1932) (who was Balkans correspondent of The Christian Scientist) may be seen as an example. The link gives you the entire book which paints a charming picture of a rural society - and has a complete chapter on painting.

Undoubtedly the most famous travel writer for this part of the world was [Patrick Leigh Fermour](#) (generally known as Paddy) whose trilogy about his walk from the English Channel to Istanbul in 1933 was finished only in 2013! [A Time of Gifts](#) (1977) covered mainly his experience of Nazi Germany; [Between the Woods and the Water](#) (1986) of Hungarian aristocratic houses in Transylvania.

But, in 2013, after a 25-year gap, we got [The Broken Road](#) (2013) dealt mainly with the Bulgarian and Greek sections of his trip. Paddy's writing is quite exquisite. He led a very full life - a [website is devoted to his memory](#); and a great biography came out quite recently.

[Rates of Exchange](#) by Malcolm Bradbury (1982) follows a British linguistics lecturer, Dr. Angus Petworth, on his first ever visit behind the Iron Curtain, to Slaka.

*His arrival, the paranoia of his hosts, the changing moods of his ever-present interpreter and guide, the secret trysts with attractive female novelists, his increasingly desperate attempts to phone home and the fall-off-the-chair-laughing diversion into second-division British diplomatic circles are brilliantly written vignettes that can only be based on real events.*

*These may or may not of course have happened in Bulgaria - Slaka ultimately borrows a little from every country once behind the Iron Curtain - but anyone who visited before (or even immediately after) 1990's overthrow of the communists will immediately recognise much of communist-era Bulgaria in Bradbury's book.*

*Especially good are the descriptions of the hotels: dark wood everywhere, omnipresent men in long coats reading newspapers, peroxide-blondes smoking at lobby bars, terrible service and Byzantine bureaucracy.*

[Imagining the Balkans](#) by Bulgarian anthropologist Maria Todorova writes that *In the approach to the First World War specific countries were embraced by economic and military alliances and some countries acquired what has been called a "pet state" status.*

[Todorova](#) sums up as the pet state approach to south-east Europe as consisting of -

*"the choosing from amongst the Balkan states a people whose predicaments to abhor, whose history and indigenous leaders to commend, whose political grievances to air, and whose national aspirations to advocate". In this way Montenegrins, Serbs, Greeks, Bulgarians and Albanians were all, at different times, picked out for laudatory comment.*

## 4.2 Historical/political

Bulgaria has a long and proud history - reaching back 1300 years. Sofia is Europe's second oldest capital.....Tribes and foreign armies have ravaged its territory for thousands of years.....The Isihia music group gives us a [haunting ensemble here of painting and music](#) to help fix that reality in our minds. And a [1980s film about the nation's first ruler - Han Asparuh](#) is a stirring 2 hour view (with sub-titles) which also makes us aware of the emptiness of Hollywood epics.....Initially I could find only one history book but am now beginning to develop the beginnings of a serious library....of which three books are the mainstay -

- " *The Rose of the Balkans - a short history of Bulgaria*" by Ivan Ilitchev (Colibri 2005) - a delightful read (with good graphics) by the Dean of Sofia University who has also produced several other books on modern Bulgarian history
- [Short History of Modern Bulgaria](#) RJ Crampton (1987)
- [Historical Dictionary of Bulgaria](#) Raymon Detrez (the Scarecrow Press 2006) - an amazing find (thanks to The National Library of Scotland). 900 pages of information (of which no less than 100 pages are a bibliography of books and articles available in the English language!!)

One of the main Sofia thoroughfares is Stamboulski St which I had assumed was a reference to Istanbul (if I had given half a thought to the Ottoman Empire, I should have known better!!). In fact it refers to one of Bulgaria's most prominent 20<sup>th</sup> Century politicians whose massive statue towers over the entrance to the Opera House -



*The Bulgarian Agrarian National Union (BANU) was a left-populist political party based in the rural areas of Bulgaria. They briefly held power from 1919 to 1923, under the charismatic leadership of Alexander Stamboliski. In 1923, the BANU government was overthrown by a military coup. Stamboliski was arrested and tortured to death.*

*Bulgarian politics almost a century ago may seem like a somewhat obscure and esoteric subject (unless you are Bulgarian!), but the history of the BANU have broader implications. During the 20th century, modernization have essentially only taken two paths: capitalist modernization or socialist modernization. The latter path eventually proved unviable, unless one counts present-day China as still being socialist. Stamboliski and the BANU attempted a third way to modernization: a path based on neither the bourgeoisie nor "the working class" (actually a socialist state bureaucracy), but rather on the peasantry. They attempted to turn Bulgaria into some kind of non-capitalist, non-socialist system based on peasant private property and cooperatives. The ultimate goal of the BANU was to replace parliamentary democracy with an "estatist" organization based on the professional organizations of peasants, artisans and workers. ("Estatist" as in based on estates.) Apparently, this was a vaguely left-wing version of corporatism.*

*What makes the BANU interesting, is precisely that their commitment to the peasantry wasn't a call for anti-modernism or Throne and Altar conservative politics. Stamboliski was a freethinker who had studied Darwin, Renan and Bernstein. He opposed both the Bulgarian monarchy, the military and the nationalist wars of expansion carried out by a number of Bulgarian governments. He wanted modernization, but a modernization that would benefit the peasantry rather than squeeze them in the usual fashion.*

*Stamboliski believed that private property was legitimate as long as it was acquired through individual or family labour. He therefore opposed big landowners and called for a far-reaching land reform. In power, Stamboliski used the power*



*of the state to carry out a radical redistribution of land. The BANU also encouraged the creation of cooperatives in agriculture, fishing and forestry. The Bulgarian government established a virtual monopoly on foreign trade in grain and tobacco, which led to the peasants getting higher prices for their products. A system of virtual rent controls was instituted to ease the burdens of the homeless after World War One. The government also set up a compulsory labour service to mobilize workers and peasants to build new roads, clean the streets of the towns, etc.*

*What this shows, of course, is that the idea of a radical redistribution of property without using the power of the state, is utopian. No matter whether the goal is to abolish private property, or merely to redistribute it, the power of the state is necessary. (The only exception would be a situation of general societal breakdown, at which point the local communities would presumably help themselves to whatever part of "big business" happens to be in their backyard.)*

*Another thing that intrigued me when reading "Peasants in power" was the peaceful foreign policy advocated by the BANU. As already indicated, Stamboliski absolutely opposed the foreign expansionism of the previous Bulgarian governments and their bizarre allies, the terrorist organization IMRO. Opposing the tide of Greater Bulgarian nationalism against Turks, Greeks, Serbs and Rumanians must have been difficult, but Stamboliski stood his ground. Eventually the BANU got the support of a plurality of the Bulgarian voters, who were sick and tired of all the loosing wars. In power, Stamboliski called for a Balkan federation and sought rapprochement with Yugoslavia, the traditional enemy of Bulgaria in all things Balkan.*

*Eventually, Stamboliski and his radical populist regime were overthrown by a bloody right wing coup. That the traditional circles in Bulgaria opposed the BANU is hardly surprising. To them, the BANU was "Bolshevist". The IMRO, a Macedonian terrorist organization with a substantial following in Bulgaria, also opposed the BANU and assassinated several of its ministers already before the coup. The IMRO wanted Bulgaria to attack the Serbs or the Greeks (or both!) in order to regain all of Macedonia for a Greater Bulgaria, a bizarre but typically nationalist project. Russian White Guards (stationed in Bulgaria at the prodding of the Allies) had been implicated in an earlier coup attempt, and resented Stamboliski's thaw with the Soviet Union.*

*Tragically, the BANU was also opposed by the other left-wing parties. The Broad Socialists (Social Democrats) opposed the BANU. So did the Communist Party, which viewed the conflicts between Stamboliski and the right-wing as an internal "bourgeois" conflict. Only after the overthrow and murder of Stamboliski did the Communists enter an alliance with the BANU, but their joint uprising against the new regime failed completely, and brutal repression followed.*

*For rather obvious reasons, nobody can tell how world history would have looked like, had a "Green" path to modernization been chosen, rather than the "Blue" or "Red" paths actually followed, or if such a path is even feasible. Still, "Peasants in power" is an interesting and fascinating read about a little known episode in that world history...*

**Review of Peasants in power: Alexander Stamboliski and the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union, 1899-1923 John Bell (1977)**

Other books clearly worth reading are -

- [Debating the Past: Modern Bulgarian History: From Stambolov to Zhivkov](#); Roumen Daskalov (2011)
- [Crown of Thorns; the reign of Boris III of Bulgaria 1918-1943](#) (1987)
- [Stefan Stambolov and the emergence of the Bulgarian nation](#) (1993)
- [Who Owns the Past?: The Politics of Time in a 'model' Bulgarian Village](#); Deema Kaneff (2006)
- [The Iron Fist](#) Alex Dmitrova (2007)
- [Voices from the Gulag - life and death in communist Bulgaria](#) (1999) looks in harrowing detail at this period of Bulgaria's history
- [Papers of the American Research Center in Sofia](#) (2014); a very impressive collection of monographs on different aspects of Balkan history eg about commerce between Brasov and Vidin in the 15<sup>th</sup> century!!

If I surf/roam energetically enough, I'm sure I will find a lot of useful stuff on the internet written by Bulgarian American academics on the contemporary scene.... The only Bulgarian intellectual, however, whose political writings I know is [Ivan Krastev](#) who seldom writes about Bulgaria. Bulgaria does not seem to have a [Tom Gallagher](#) - an outsider able to cast a caustic eye over recent events. At the moment, therefore, I can offer, on contemporary Bulgaria, only -

- *Communism versus Democracy Bulgaria 1944-1987*; Nasya Krlevska-Owens (Sofia 2010); which tells a harrowing story - particularly the immediate aftermath of the seizure of power; the savage massacre without trial of tens of thousands of the educated, professional class of Bulgaria leaving indeed only the few who were professed communists or the others who escaped with prison sentences or simply ran.....
- *The Cooperation and Verification Mechanism; shared political irresponsibility*; collective academic authorship (Sofia 2014). Promises to be a useful tale of how Bulgaria coped with the mechanism that the EC put in place at the 2004/7 period of purgatory was ending for it and Romania but with strong doubts in Brussels about the actual respect for the rule of law in practice in these two countries. Such scepticism was justified and only Romania, in the past 2 years, has shown signs of real judicial reform....

### 4.3 Bulgarian Literature

Two classics are -

- "[Under the Yoke](#)" by Ivan Vazov (1888). This best-known and best-loved Bulgarian novel does not - typically! - figure on the English google search machine - save for a scanty four line entry on Wikipedia. Its plot can be read on [this university essay](#)
- [Bai Ganyo: Incredible Tales of a Modern Bulgarian](#) By Aleko Konstantinov (1895) about which a reviewer says -

*Konstantinov writes each vignettes as if it were the retelling by one of the men in his close circle of friends. This is one of the many things I really loved about the book. Each anecdote has a style that is slightly different and nicely underlines the premise of a group of friends exchanging tales.*

*There is a breeziness and chattiness that provides the same feeling as the best late night discussions with friends in a cafe. This style not only drew me into each vignette but also made me feel included in that circle of close friends as they shared their stories.*

*Each of the tale tellers-given various monikers to obscure the actual identities of the men who were the templates-was based on a real member of Konstantinov's circle. Perhaps he was able to imbue each story with their style of discourse because he knew them so very well and enjoyed such jovial story telling on a regular basis. Fortunately for us modern readers, this edition provides very nice footnotes that illuminate the historical counterparts to Konstantinov's tale tellers.*

*The vignettes are divided in two sections though they were originally published in various periodicals and collections.*

*Part 1 contains tales of Bai Ganyo in Europe outside of Bulgaria. Konstantinov has taken the Bulgarian stereotype that Bai Ganyo represents and turned it to his own ends. At times deceitful, small-minded and miserly, Ganyo is also irreverent, charming, rascally, and fun. Konstantinov was looking at the best and worst of what he saw in his fellow Bulgarians as they experienced their national growing pains once leaving Ottoman rule. His writing seemed to imply hope and good humor mixed in with this his critical social commentary.*

More modern

- Elisabeth Kostova's The Historian (2005) is a Gothic novel which takes in both Bulgaria and Romania (as well as France, thanks to the Bogomils)
- [Street without a Name - childhood and other misadventures in Bulgaria](#) ; Kapka Kassabova (Portobello Books 2009) - several of whose other novels are also available in English
- [Circus Bulgaria](#); Deyen Enev (Portobello Books 2010)
- [Nine Rabbits](#); by Virginia Zaharieva (Istros 2012) - a very nice-looking collection of memoirs and poetry
- the fascinating memoir replete with photos - You Live your Life But Once - A Memoir from Bulgaria by Dimi Gachev (2012)
- [East of the West](#) ; by Miroslaw Penkov (Sceptre 2012)

## 5. Wine and Food

One of the most contentious fields (!! )....."one man's food is another's poison".....But it is the most carefully researched of the sections in this book - surpassed only by the time which has gone into the pursuit of Bulgarian painting - the subject of chapters 9 onwards.....

Bulgaria has been well endowed by its climate - and therefore produces marvellous vegetables and grapes. It is also famous [for its yoghurt](#) which is [celebrated here](#) and [explained here](#)

I always start with.....the white wine although Bulgarians open with their *national spirit* - *rakia*, which can be made from grapes, apples, peaches, pears or plum....I prefer the grape-based.. First time I tasted rakia in 2002, when I sped through the country on the way to the Turkish Aegean, I found it inspid. But I have now had a chance to taste various brands - and compare it with various Romanian palinka - and have become an afficiando.

*The pic shows one of my hauls from the Sofia antique shops - a set of the small, shaped bottles in which rakia used to be drunk. These are 1950s or early 1960s - with wry humour stamped on to the glass.*



And here is a write up of one brand which won a few years back a silver medal in the International Review of Spirits Award -

*Golden salmon colour. Vanilla and toasted nut aromas, nice oily texture. Dryish, vanilla bean oily nut flavors. Finishes with a lightly sweet powdered sugar and pepper fade. A nice texture and finish but could use more on the mid-palate (!!!)*

For the past year or so, under the influence of my arty Bulgarian friends, my preferred "poison" has been Yambolski Rakia (a town in east-central Bulgaria). Half a litre for 4.5 euros!



But I have now been introduced to [Kailashka Rakia](#) from Pleven, north central of the country. It has very good marketing - with a label reminding us of a Kentucky Bourbon and a 1922 date. And also found (in CasaVino) a simple one from Svishtov.

OK now on to the serious stuff - WINE!!

Remember this is the country of [Dionysus](#)

There's a [nice little bit of background here](#); and [a plug for seven wines](#) which must be tasted.

But first a confession.....I have fallen out of love with *red wines*.....!

That indeed is putting it mildly.....the reality is that my body rejects red.....is this, I wondered, because of the chemical additives which are being added these days? But why don't I have this reaction to white wines? I still search around in the hope of finding a quaffable red. Mavruds are worth this sort of experimentation and are to be found nowadays in the southern Melnik area - in the Struma Valley which takes you to Greece - and I did find a stunning organic wine from that area, stocked at a great Sofia foodshop [Bachalia](#) which stocks products from small rural businesses.

Since 2002, however, I have become a great fan of *Bulgarian whites* - I still remember the first stunning taste of a cold Targovishte Chardonnay in Balcik on the northern edge of the Black Sea on our return drive from the Turkish Aegean!

These days I try to find the reasonably-priced St Ilyia white wines from central Bulgaria (Stara Zagora area) - 3 euros a bottle. They are part of the Edward Miroglio group.

I also recommend the products of the [Katarzyna winery](#) on the border with Greece and of the [Black Sea Gold winery](#) of Pomorie (Burgas) whose Soroko (Chardonnay) has the sort of "tickle" I love. And the nearby [Ethno winery](#) offers amazing tastes and prices.

This is what I was saying in 2012 and 2013 after attending the autumn wine-tasting weekends in Sofia.....

Monday, November 19, 2012

### [Bulgarian Wine - as Culture](#)

Well I certainly learned a lot more about Bulgarian wines over the weekend - particularly about the more pricey wines I would never normally buy. You can such great quality here for 2/3 euros a litre that I would never pay more than 8 euros a bottle! I discover (through a great little book "Catalogue of Bulgarian Wines 2013" (available for 15 leva [at branches of Casavino](#) here) that there are at least 97 independent wineries in this small country - each with several brand names with its own range of wines.

And 250 of them were available for tasting over the weekend!!

As attendance was by invitation only, this suggests that there are more than 500 different wines in the country!

I was more disciplined yesterday, perfecting the swill and spit - and, even then, physically not able to taste too many reds because of the semi-revulsion my body has developed to them. One exception was [a fascinating anti-oxidant red wine - Alfa Vita](#) - which adds a strong medical tone to its marketing. It certainly was smooth and tasty.

The CEO I spoke to (also the driving force behind the local Academy for Wine) was kind enough to give me a bottle in exchange for a copy of my booklet on Bulgarian realist painters! And advised me to drink 50 ml or so for breakfast!! At 5 euros a bottle, it's just what the doctor ordered!

One of my goals yesterday was to savour the Roses on offer - I have never been a great fan of these but, as my taste for reds has declined, so the few Roses I have come across have become more interesting. And there is a great choice here!

Two stalls left the greatest impression - *Villa Yustina* (established only in 2006 and located in a village in the Rhodopes foothills near Plovdiv) by virtue of the enthusiastic and helpful approach of their sales guy Vencislav Lyubenov.

And the stall of the well known *Katarzyna Estate* (located mainly at Svilengrad near the Greek/Turkish border) - by virtue of it being the only one whose staff (women) were encouraging feedback from their customers.

The wine fair was so popular the second day that it was almost impossible to move from stall to stall! As each visitor left, they were presented with free copies of the (massive glossy) [DiVine magazine](#) which sponsored the fair. Intriguingly the cover picture is of champagne bottles in a picture frame - is this a case of the wineries bidding to be included in the European Capital of Culture?

There is a serious argument to be made for eating and wine drinking as a serious cultural pursuit - perhaps the DiVine magazine should consider having a few pages on Bulgarian painting (and other cultural material) in each of its future issues?

Interestingly there was a good place on Kurnigradska St (almost at the corner with Vitosha) which offered a heady mix of paintings, wines, books and musical performance. It has now, sadly, been replaced by a so-called antique shop which to me looks like a money-laundering front - although a new little gallery (Absinthe) has opened in Tsar Samuil St (off Solunska) which mixes wines and aquarelles!!

Wednesday, November 21, 2012

### [wine as medicine](#)

November seems to be the period for testing the Sofia medical systems - this time last year I blogged about an experience with [the excellent Military Hospital here](#) which resulted in a diagnosis of excessive uric acid and a savage diet for a month with no wine. I've been suffering for some time from some degeneration of the knee tissue - result probably of rowing, jogging, tennis and badminton over the past 50 years (did I tell you I trained with the Azeri youth badminton team a decade ago??!!).

It was in Baku I had my first treatment of the knee with electrodes (20 years earlier I had a guy with a hypnotic medallion massage the knee briefly and cure a pain which physiotherapists had not been able to shift.

Since I came off a Kyrgyzstan mountain/hill climb in 2006 the knees have been weak and no one has been able to give me a decent diagnosis - let alone treatment (despite MRS etc) In April, however, a Sofia specialist ran some doppler and other tests and reckoned it was linked to some spinal weakness - so here I am now having some excellent physiotherapy in the Military Hospital.

The Doctor who supervises the treatment gave me on Monday the most thorough and professional examination which I have received in a decade - and has me now undergoing a 10 day course of magnetic, electric and manual treatment. And in a section of the hospital whose walls are adorned with paintings (for sale). Great idea!

So hats off to the Bulgarians - not least because we exchange tips about Bulgarian wine as it proceeds. Pavel Banyia is the place I had been advised to go for the best Spa experience (in the heart of the country) but it was fully booked. [Her advice was Hisar](#) - for both the thermal waters and wine (StareSel).

Speaking of which - as I walked back from the Hospital (aided by my antique vanity cane - which is great for smacking badly-parked cars!) I discovered another of the charming regional wine shops which are scattered around Sofia.

So far I have come across shops selling Vidin; Magura; Karnovat wines and today I passed a tiny shop which had a huge advertisement about Belogradchik wines (like the first 2 in the North-East). I had driven through the

village (Borovitsa) last year but not stopped and decided this time therefore (blindtaste) to buy 2 litres of a Chardonnay/Sauvignon Blanc mix - for less than 5 euros. Back home, the taste was impeccable!!

And a lovely little wine shop with quality wines at reasonable prices has opened at the Russian monument on the corner of Makedonski and Skobelev Bvds (although its situated in the latter, its address is the former!). It's [Vino Orenda](#) and the initiative of a young man - and is typical of the attitude and spirit here. It's love of wine which has driven him - not big business connections.

I'm also glad to see that one of the Bulgarian wineries - [Light Castle](#) - is supporting Astry Gallery - being one of the sponsors of Vihra's [latest annual 30x30 exhibition](#).

**UPDATE;** on 4 Feb 2015 I discovered a great Medi (Struma) Valley outlet on Bvd Yanko Sakzov 24 (near my flat - just down the tramway at the park from the Levski monumnt) with about 10 separate wines in barrels. The Mavrud was great at 2.5 euros a litre.....

November 2013

## **Bulgarian Whites**



The annual 2 day Bulgarian wine fair I attended 2 weekends ago here in Sofia was hard work (!) - and required a rest afterwards!

For 10 euros I had a 2-day pass and more than 200 wines to taste. The things I do for my readers!

I did my best on the Saturday - the white and rose day - but found red Sunday a bit of a slog - with my pallet and tongue fairly quickly getting badly coated!

For some reason, I decided to score the wines out of 6.0 and the white wines I appreciated came out as follows -

- Lovica - Chardonnay (6 levs!) 4.5 out of 6.0
- LV - Colombard (5 levs! and 4.5 score) and Sauvignon Blanc (SB)

- Black Sea Gold - Muscat El Mar (6 levs) - **find of the day!** Salty Hills Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc (15 levs) - one of the best (Silver medal)
- Minkov - Rheinriesling. OK
- Katarzyna - SB (4.2)
- Marvin - Viognier and Chardonnay and Viognier - both 4.5s in my scoring
- Villa Yustina - Blanc Cuvee (8 levs) 4.5
- Zagreus - white Mavrud - 4.5 on my scoring
- Medi Valley - Chardonnay Incanto **(4.9!!) 18 levs** and Chardonnay and Viognier
- No Man's Land 600 SB 12 levs
- Kapatovo - Chardonnay and Viognier 4.5 (18 levs)

On Sunday, the only wine which impressed me was [the Ethno range of wines](#). They are from [the Sungurlare valley](#) near Burgas on the Black Sea and the Chardonnay I am now drinking (3 euros) got a silver medal (in the 2013 "Chardonnays of the World" somewhere). How do they do it??

*The photo is of the wine museum in Sungurlare village - the wine area very near Burgas*

## Update (January 2015)

I missed the 2014 autumn wine-tasting but it was, in any event, a bad year for wine - early hail destroyed a lot of the crop.....

In forays into the small shops this month, the smaller Melnik vineyards in the Struma Valley have great red wines.....eg [Levunovo's Strymon](#) which can be delivered (free of charge) to your home here in Sofia.

Also a fantastic organic red from [this shop which stocks only Bulgarian produce](#) from small local places

And a great white wine find this month (in the Picadilly chain) was the *Belizza Chardonnay* - which turned out to be from Katarzyna



## Food

It's taken some time for the food to arrive but - no complaints - the wines have compensated!

Choose from [7 Bulgarian food classics](#)

But first, of course, find your restaurant - silly me!!

You're spoiled for choice in Sofia!

- For sheer value for money and atmosphere, there is the atmospheric house at the corner of 6th September and Khan Krum Streets. [Divaka](#) is actually a chain of three with the more central (and cavernous) being just off Vitosha Blvd and Solunska St.
- There is also another chain - *The Happy* - which offers great food and wine - it's always busy but somehow there always seems room for another...



small Bulgarian wineries....

- The [Club of the Architect](#) is the classiest restaurant. Good atmosphere and good prices - in located in the university and diplomatic quarter.
- *The Rocket* offers a great experience (with a retro decor and rakias a speciality) in the gardens at Blvd Dondukov right next door to the Vaska Emanouilova Art Gallery
- [Grape Central](#) Tsar Samuel 45 is a new addition to a small street which offers great art experiences. Nice brick décor and a fantastic selection of Bulgarian wines, grouped by Region - with modest eating to match the wine.
- *Made in Home* (Angel Knchev ul. 30A) is a small local restaurant (house wine only) with a great atmosphere (for me). It's just off Vitosha.
- *L'Etranger* at Tsar Simeon 78 (just off Marie Luise Blvd and down from the Mosque and Halle) is a delightful recent find. Run by a French chef and his Bulgarian wife, they have a small tasty menu and great wines selected from



## 6. Bulgarian Stereotypes

National stereotypes always make for good reading - so try these for a laugh.....

- <http://www.nationalstereotype.com/bulgarian-stereotypes/>
- <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2011/12/20111210122330666785.html>
- [http://www.inst.at/trans/17Nr/2-12/2-12\\_boyadzhieva17.htm](http://www.inst.at/trans/17Nr/2-12/2-12_boyadzhieva17.htm)

A graver tone is struck in the relevant section of Richard Lewis' 600-plus page opus on the world's cultures - *When Cultures Collide* - which says this about the Bulgarians -

*Bulgarians differ considerably from other Slavs in their values and communication style, probably because of their origins. In general they are cooler and more pragmatic than many Slavs, particularly when compared with Serbs. Quiet and soberness are valued; you will see little of the hotheaded discussion or noisy public disputes that are only too common in Belgrade. They do, however, share with other Slavs a widespread feeling of pessimism about national helplessness. This is decreasing as the young post-communist generation begins to take the reins.*

*In general, Bulgarian values tend to be rural, with homespun virtues, as one might expect from people living in a predominantly agricultural society - eg*

*Disciplined; sober*

*Pragmatic; cautious*

*persistent and stubborn; good organizers*

*industrious; determined*

*steady, with stamina; suspicious but tolerant of foreigners*

*animosity toward Turks; inventive*

*highly literate; thorough*

### **Leadership Style and Status**

*Bulgarian social barriers are few because of the lack of hereditary nobles. Although a wide range of people can aspire to leadership, no outstanding political or business leaders have emerged during the last decade; national pessimism and self-doubt hinder their development. In business, the future Bulgarian manager is likely to be less autocratic than Serbian or Greek top executives. Bulgarian employees are more passive than Serbs, Croats or Romanians.*

### **Space and Time**

*Bulgaria is not an overcrowded country, but when engaged in interesting conversation, they sit closer to their interlocutor than would a Northern European. In public there is little pushing or shoving and lines are orderly. Bulgarians are more punctual than most Slavs, though bureaucrats usually keep people waiting. On the surface, Bulgarians show little sense of urgency.*

*Other Balkan peoples consider them slow-moving. Patience is certainly a virtue in Bulgaria, and it will be required of you—if you wish to achieve your ends, that is.*

### **Communication Pattern**

*In comparison with the South Slavs, Bulgarians are reticent and reserved in the early stages of acquaintance. In this they resemble the Czechs and Slovenians. Before giving full expression to their feelings or opinions, Bulgarians engage in a series of preliminary encounters, during which they sound out and size up (albeit in a friendly manner) their conversation partners.*

*During this period they are decidedly less flowery or rhetorical in their speech than the Yugoslavs, Romanians or Hungarians. At this stage, it is very difficult to extract opinions or attitudes from them.*

*When this exploratory period has passed, Bulgarians open up to display a modicum of quiet charm and make their requests in a circuitous manner, avoiding confrontation whenever they can.*

*The Bulgarian language, being Slavic, is rich in vocabulary, similes, metaphors, symbolism and allegory. The better linguists among them enrich their English with the same tools. They enjoy conversation—an art for them—but are less prone to exaggeration than South Slavs or other Mediterranean people. Bulgarians, like the Greeks, are famous for their unusual manner of saying yes and no. Nodding the head up and down signifies a negative. Shaking it from side to side means yes. The Bulgarians are well aware that this is the reverse of others' body language and sometimes nod in the Western European or American manner, which might be confusing.*

### **Listening Habits**

*Bulgarians are excellent listeners. They interrupt their compatriots rarely, foreigners hardly ever. Their attentiveness denotes their proclivity toward sizing up the speaker. In general, they respect Western opinions, though they do not always place the right connotation on what is said. A few minutes after absorbing a presentation or new idea, they will give a modicum of feedback, but they will not reveal the full extent of their reactions.*

### **Behaviour at Meetings and Negotiations**

*Meetings with Bulgarians are generally satisfactory affairs; a win-win goal combined with a solid, conservative approach will give you the feeling of steady progress and trust. Business in Bulgaria is rarely rushed. Goals are generally set in a slow, deliberate manner, and you need to allow plenty of time for Bulgarians to reach them. Endemic bureaucracy will do nothing to speed the process up. Keep in mind, though, that Bulgarians have an inner urge to succeed; patience can work wonders. Initially, at meetings, Bulgarians exercise considerable reserve and hedge their options as long as you allow them to. Their requests will be made in an indirect and circuitous manner. Their reactions to your requests will also be circuitous.*

*This does not imply negativity, but Byzantine habits that have little to do with straightforwardness.*

### **Formal initial period of reserve and reticence**

- use titles
- difficult to extract
- sounds out and sizes up opponents opinions and attitudes
- makes requests in circuitous manner
- hedges options
- uses charm
- no confrontation
- tries for win-win
- reaches pragmatic conclusion

*Nationals from Norway, the Netherlands and the United States can get irritated with what they see as "deviousness," playing their cards close to their chest. It is unlikely that Bulgarians, however sincere, will depart from this practice.*

*They respond well to Westerners who give early evidence of trustworthiness.*

*Their indirectness causes them to employ a roundabout approach to many issues, especially determining price or the bottom line. Calculation of profit does not come easily to them, particularly the Western meaning of profit. Most successful businesses in Bulgaria depend on a network of connections and the exchange of favours. Go-betweens are often necessary, especially when gifts or "facilitation" fees come into question.*

As Francis Urquart (in *The House of Cards*) might say - "you might well say this - but I couldn't possibly comment!!"

## 7. The retro charm of Sofia

Sofia is my favourite European City - it has the liveable atmosphere which has disappeared in other capitals - with great parks, restaurants, galleries and public transport - and few high-rise buildings in its centre. I love nothing so much as a brisk morning walk/cycle to the pool/fitness; browsing in one of the great vegetable markets or second-hand bookshops; a chat with my gallery friends; often livened by a shot of Kalyshka Rakia... and a lazy dinner with a superb Bulgarian wine



People tend to be dismissive of Sofia and it certainly lacks the grandeur, if not monumentality, of Bucharest buildings. But the old centre compensates by retaining a certain feel of the pre-war period.....

- Sofia Enigma and Stigma (Enthusiast 2011) - Ljubomir Milchev - a little book which contains evocative black and white photos of old, crumbling buildings in Sofia;
- "*Time and Beauty; art nouveau in the Bulgarian cities*" ed Vittore Collina (2014) - a lovely booklet produced with great care and thought - a real labour of love
- "*A Walk in the Street of Sofia Guidebook*" (Kras Plus 2002); marvellous bilingual history of the 6 parts of central Sofia for those who want to appreciate the city's singularity by foot.
- Tourist Guide of Sofia - produced by the Tourist Office, with the younger market in mind

The city has an old-fashioned gentility - mainly from the tiny shop and gallery units of its centre with both young and old eking out a fragile existence but at least one whose rhythm they control. With its parks and buskers with their retro music; narrow streets, small shops and atmosphere, the owners on the doorstep with a coffee and cigarette talking with friends, Sofia should be one of the pin-ups of the slow food movement.

The modest grid-iron system which is its centre developed after the 2nd WW bombing; has kept cars in their place; and created small spaces which old and young alike have been able to use to pursue their dreams - whether shops where they sell the clothes they design themselves, micro art galleries, tobacco, wine cellars, great ceramics.

Of course the downside of such charm is that those who run the tiny vegetable, dressmaker, thread, tobacco shops and various types of galleries are just eking out a living. But the spirit they represent is priceless - and deserves more support.

I also have a mountain house in the Romanian Carpathians and therefore have [a term of comparison](#) - which strengthens my conviction that Bulgaria has something very special to offer the visitor.

Both countries have superb landscapes - and they are both proud peoples. Somehow, the Bulgarian pride is simpler. Since Winston Churchill's put-down in the late 1940s of the Leader of the Labour Party - "a modest man - he has a lot to be modest about", I hesitate to use that adjective. But that



is part of the attraction of the Bulgarians - they are not pretentious and have not spoiled the glorious heritage and landscape (and wines!) with which their country is endowed.

Despite (or perhaps because of?) its size, Bulgaria seems more difficult to penetrate than its larger (and still estranged) neighbour to the north but painting is still, I have discovered, a good route to use to explore its interior....Remarkably, its artists had only some 60 years of freedom before they were faced from 1944 with the [diktats of communist rulers](#) and, even today, art history in the country is shaped by figures who had power in that 45 year period.



[Bulgarian caricaturists](#) of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were amongst the world's best - names such as Alexander Bozhinov, [Ilyia Beshkov](#), Marco Behar, Stoiyan Venev and Boris Angeloushev - many of them good left-wingers in the 1930s who found themselves in positions of authority a decade later. I would love to have witnessed a conversation between Beshkov, for example, and artists such as Boris Denev, Constantin Shtarkelov and Nikolai Boiadjiev who were [forbidden from painting](#).

There is still all too little written (even in Bulgarian) about this period of the country's life.... All the more delightful therefore to discover recently a small book about the friendship between Beshkov and a journalists refugee from Nazi German Jacob Altmaier. The [full text of the book](#) by Maria Ovcharova is online - unfortunately without some good examples of Beshkov's satires....

Despite the continuing political silences about the 42 years Bulgaria spent under communism, the 20<sup>th</sup> century can still be felt in Sofia -

I bought recently a (copy of) a little 1947 woodcutting of the part of Vasil Levsky Street which has the University at the end, complete with a couple of cars and a horse and cart - part of a series dictator Georgi Dimitrov apparently commissioned of artists then, That was the same day I came across a lovely 1935 landscape by Boris Denev - banned by the communist regime from paintings after 1944 - which had been lying in a house for several decades. It still has the typical white frame used in the 1940/1950s.

And one of my prize possessions is this 1942 journal on every page of which are several pencilled figures - clearly the work of Ilyia Beshkov, the famous caricaturist.

Keep your eyes open for the new street plaques which explain the names of the streets in central Sofia....



## 8. Bulgarian Musings (in separate volume)

Over the last 4-5 years, posts about life in Sofia and Bulgarian culture and history have appeared about once a month [on my blog](#) - more frequently in 2011/12 when I was driving around the country looking at the various regional galleries.

Cumulatively they form an interesting picture - although I still have to decide how they should best be edited.....chronologically or thematically.....

I'm not, at the moment, able to integrate them with this section since, with 200 pages and so many photographs, the resulting single word document is too unstable to allow me to make alterations and create a pdf file.

So people will have to make do with 2 volumes - which, actually, may make for easier reading?

But please do have a look at the other volume. It's an easy read on a variety of topics - Bulgarian history; painting, sculpture, Sofia shops and streets; wine. As well as the occasional musing on other topics.....

You can link to volume 2 at ????????

For the moment, let me whet your appetite with these random, early posts.....



Sunday, July 10, 2011

## Vrachanski Balkans



Up and away early to avoid the midday heat which once (actually three times) disabled the (old) car a few years back in this part of the world at this time of the year as were driving back from the lovely Thassos island.

Just outside Drama in Greece - as we were beginning the ascent for the new border crossing there - the car engine just stopped. We were kindly treated (with an overnight stay needed for a petrol filter to be replaced) before the same happened at Plovdiv - after much meandering through gorges and round the densely wooded edges of the Rhodopes (with many minarets in the villages). After a mechanic asked for 300 euros with no guarantees, we discovered the car was working again and

decided to proceed - over the Balkans. A Romanian lorry driver confirmed that it was the heat - it had happened to him.

Just as we reached the top of the mountain ridge, the car stopped again - but, by then, I knew the trick - just to wait ten minutes or so.

Anyway I needn't have worried today - since, apart from my climb over the Petrohan Pass starting before 09.00, the road is heavily wooded and therefore protected from the heat. But the surface is bad (particularly on the descent) and the road twisty - so a 100 kilometres journey from Sofia to Varshets actually took 3 hours (including a trip to Pennywise in the nearby village of Berkovitsa for a bottle of Mezzek Sauvignon/Pinot Gris).

I'm in the heart of Vrachanski Balkan Nature Park here - with towering mountain ranges on 2 sides. The [hotel is very nicely situated](#) - with solar panels covering the entire roof (very rare!). I was able to check in (to a large room), get organised and have a swim all before midday.

Tuesday, July 12, 2011

## out of this world

I'm now in Belogradchik and could hardly believe my eyes when I saw the first rock formations - some 20 kilometres before I hit the town. They extend over a 600-700 sq km area. The area is very poor - I detoured to the old carpet village of Chiprovitsa in an amazing bowl of mountains.

A sleepy and disconsolate place - with many Trabans in the area. I had expected to see carpets displayed in the street - but all was desolate with only a small shop displaying very expensive stuff - 5 times what I had paid for an old carpet in a Sofia antique place!

here is a [very nice write-up of the Belogradchik rocks and town here](#).



Friday, August 5, 2011

### Sofia - again



Another very pleasant lazy (yester)day enjoying the incredible variety which Sofia has to offer anyone who appreciates serendipity - and who has some aesthetic inclinations. A slow walk up Ignatiev st in the morning to the City Gallery - which, in addition to the special "Other Eye" selection of paintings from its vaults by art critics, has at the moment [a marvellous exhibition of paintings of monasteries in the Balkans](#).

Then a meander in the park where the jazz musicians were, as usual, active - giving everyone great pleasure. Then across to the great Tabak cafe at the back of the National Gallery - where they were loading various fascinating sculptures (hope it wasn't a heist!).

There was a small political meeting going on nearby - of older people.

And, at the open market in front of Alexander Nevski Cathedral, I picked up a large Chiproviste carpet for only 100 euros -

and also an amusing small "Troitsa" painting on wood by a young Dmitrov (Ivalio?) - the trinity were a corrupt looking mayor,

teacher and priest all imbibing.

Wednesday, September 28, 2011

### visual pleasures

It's good to be back in Sofia - with its vegetables (leeks and tomatoes); galleries; pleasant cycling and pace of life.

The Sofia City Gallery continues to celebrate its greats - with a special exhibition of one of Bulgaria's most revered painters - Nikola Petrov (1881-1916). I can understand why his influence (despite his youth) was so great - his landscapes are delicate; his portrait sketches deft; and his nudes were clearly the inspiration for Nikola Boiadjiev. A very nice little book accompanies the exhibition - at only 5 euros.



I hadn't realised that Petrov was from one of the Danube towns - in the north-east, Vidin - which I haven't been able to get to so far but will certainly visit once the Romanian engineers eventually finish their half of the new bridge (another year off I suspect). The town does have [an art gallery](#). For me, Nikola Taney is the greatest and is also from a Danube village - Svishtov - the signs for whose car ferry I saw as I left the Russe District



Monday, October 3, 2011

## Rhodope charms



The Bulgarian roads are always a pleasure to drive - with the exception of some of the sinuous small roads which weave their way through the wooded hills which take up one third of the landmass of the country. I had a pleasant 4 hour drive yesterday afternoon - the first stretch along the superb and scenic open highway from Sofia to Plovdiv. Mountain ranges and valleys; then the lovely sight of the 2 pimple hills which stick out from the plain and mark ancient Phillipopolis; loop round the city and then under the stunning Assenovgrad fortress on another of these impossible rock-carved roads which characterise southern Bulgaria.

As always a strong river also blasted its way through gorges and across the stones nearby. My exhaust suddenly developed a hole and I disturbed the sabbath as I spun through the tired but handsome old villages round the fashionable skiing resorts to reach Smolyan at 16.30.

I was keen to visit their municipal art gallery again - last visited 2 years ago to my very great pleasure. Amongst other local artists, I was introduced to the work of Anastas Staikov by a Slovak woman who guided us around and introduced us to the Director. What struck me was what they were achieving against the odds - they had insufficient money to maintain their stock properly - let alone advertise it. I had assumed that the gallery would be closed Monday. It was very easy to find - as always it was the Regional history Museum which was signposted and I had a vague recollection that the art gallery was next door. And so it was. But Sunday is, unusually, closing day for it (although the history museum was open). The curator there took me next door where the Gallery Director was working and confirmed that it would be open tomorrow.

I have to confess at this stage that I have been accompanied on the travels since early August by a stray kitten whose cries were heard just as we were about to leave Sofia in the first week of August. Impossible to resist his charms, he travelled with great serenity and aplomb first the 375 kilometres to Bucharest - and, the following day, the 3 hour journey to the mountains. My Carpathian mountain house was his heaven - 3 mice caught, for example. Since then, he has done another 1,250 kilometres - and could now reasonably be considered a nomad veritable. I smuggled him into the Smolyan hotel in my rucksack - and, having slept for most of the 4 hours, he is now once more asleep at the back of the laptop. Hopefully he will not give the game away in the next 3 hotel overnights!

*The painting is a Zdrawko Alexandrov from the Smolyan gallery*

Wednesday, October 5, 2011

## Rhodopes



I was nicely received (as always) in the Smolyan Gallery on Monday - which has a very large space (3 floors) and a great collection but almost no money for maintenance. My colleague, Belin (who was leading the workshop) is an architect by training; now an academic; and was, in the late 1990s, a Deputy Minister for Regional development. He explained for me the ambitious agenda of the socialist government in the 1970s when they merged 3 villages there (as they did elsewhere) and created urban systems which are now tottering.

He also suggested a possible reason for the very different fates of villages in post-socialist Bulgaria and Romania. He suggests that land ownership was more completely collectivised in Bulgaria than in Romania - and that there was therefore no base left in Bulgarian villages post-1989 for the sort of self-sufficiency which still survives for example in my Romanian village amongst the old.

A marvellous journey on Tuesday through and over the mountains to Kardjali - quite amazing to see the isolated homesteads clinging so high up to the mountainsides! And all the minarets - most new. Kardjali has all the bustle and townscape of Turkish town.

I was able, with some difficulty, to locate the art gallery - rather small and pathetic despite some great paintings - including the great Atanas Mihov (above) and this delightful Stefan Ivanov.



Saturday, December 24, 2011

## Odd Galleries



After 4 years of familiarity with Sofia (almost 3 years in residence) it is typical that I stumbled yesterday on a well-established (and prestigious) gallery focussing on Bulgaria's old masters - hidden away in a charming and old part of Sofia between Prague Bvd and Bvds Makedonia/Totleben. It's [the Tzennotsi Gallery](#) and has the richest collection (in more senses than one) of all the galleries I have visited here.

The picture here is a Russi Genchev which the gallery would not deign to keep. This Boris Denev which adorns its spacious display walls is a more appropriate exemple of its exhibits.

And, like, the current exhibition at the City Gallery, there were so many painters of whom I hadn't heard. Some of the paintings seem to have been there for several years (eg some Vladimir Dmitrov's at 20,000 euros in the 2009 Antiques Price Guide) - which makes one wonder about their business model. Clearly they cater for bigger spenders than me! Probably an institutional market ie

the banks! Talking of which, one of the nice features of many hotels here in Bulgaria is their display of (in many cases local) paintings.

In the same street as the Gallery (Buzludja) we also found an enticing little Weinstube ([Vestibule Wine Ambassador](#)) which turns out also to be a producer and seller of "bourgeois" furniture. Definitely worth a visit – both in winter for its cosy, traditional interior and in the summer for its garden area at the back. Also in the same street a patisserie with a great range of its own products – including a large apple and walnut cake round for 5 euros!



And we also had an interesting encounter in Tsar Samuel with the sinister Masons. One of the many tiny shops in the area between Hristov Botev and Vitosha with the products of imaginatively-crafted dresses, shawls etc enticed us in and to the purchase of an embroidered cardigan. We were so pleased we readily accepted several small calendar cards which marketed its 50-or so year-old artisan – only to discover when I accessed the website that [it had very strong masonic connections](#). I was so horrified I contemplated returning the cardigan – since, in Scotland, the Masons are a highly divisive force – in the 1970s with a strong and corrupt presence in the police forces. And I remember my (highly tolerant) father – a Scottish Presbyterean Minister – railing against their influence amongst his "Elders". But, in this part of the world where there was so much repression, [perhaps they played a different role?](#) They were certainly outlawed by the fascist forces here in the early 1940s and its members persecuted under the communists. Sadly the intrinsic secrecy of the organisation makes that [difficult to check out properly](#). Their apologists are full of good-sounding rhetoric about freedom and democracy but I cannot take seriously anyone who associates with their silly tribal initiation rituals with trousers at half-mast and quasi-religious artefacts.

Monday, December 26, 2011

### [Fossils and patting sticks](#)



I spent two Xmas'es working in Baku, Azerbaijan – and very much appreciated the absence of the shopping fever and pressures which characterise these days in the West. Even His Holiness the Pope is apparently lamenting in his Christmas homily that Christmas has become an increasingly commercial celebration.

But Sofia must be one of the best places to be to avoid the crassness of Xmas. True, the walking St (Vitosha) has overhead decorations – but they are modest and hardly noticed.

Otherwise (if you avoid the malls which have opened

only in the past few years) things are almost normal.

And some imagination is used to offer special attractions eg a large fossil market was open last week in the Museum of Natural History which offered marvellous shapes, sizes and textures at very cheap prices – eg this very aesthetic sea hedgehog fossil which doubles as a paper weight.



Saturday we wanted to buy a "sooroovachka" - a stick decorated with embroidery, dried fruit, coins etc which kids in this part of the world use for patting family, friends and visitors (in Romania its' called "sorkova") whilst saying a wish for health, wealth and happiness to the one patted.

Bulgarians and Romanians give the child money at the end of the patting which they believe is their way of buying success for the coming year. The women's market - the collection of open air stalls between Bvds Hristo Botev and Elizabeth - was the place to find it. Most of the products are local fruit and vegetables - with the spice stalls being my favourites. Such an incredible variety of spices and medicinal teas!

I realise that I haven't posted any video links of Bulgaria yet on the site - [here's a good one to start with](#).



Monday, November 12, 2012

## Last sanctuaries of originality



In the increasingly homogenised world in which we sadly now exist, second-hand bookshops and private art galleries are the last sanctuaries of originality, discovery and ambience.

My booklet on Bulgarian Realist painters lists 16 private galleries here in Sofia - focussing on those which sell the more classic painters of the last century. Almost by definition, there's not much room to move around in such galleries - most of the paintings are in piles against the wall or in storerooms. They have a great atmosphere - compared with the more clinical aspect of some contemporary galleries. The Inter Nos Gallery - which I mentioned yesterday - is a perfect example of that atmosphere (although now sadly changed hands).

Valerie Filipov is an interesting example of a dealer who used to have such an Aladdin's Cave but now operates in the more clinical setting of The Impression Art Gallery, 11 Vasil Levski Bvd which holds special exhibitions of contemporary artists. Trouble with this approach is that it takes less than 5 minutes to see the display! I vastly preferred the serendipity of his previous Cave!

Last week I said hello to Biliana Djingova who opened [the A and B gallery](#) last year at 45, Tsar Assen St for special exhibitions of contemporaries - and was very taken with Maria Bogdanova, a few of whose works are showing (see above) - as are her husband's. A wonderful balance of precision, colour and humour. Bulgaria is lucky at the moment in having a few artists (eg Angela Minkova, Natasha Atanassova, Nikolai Tiholov) who have this combination. This is a Tiholov of Daniela's)

And yesterday I visited the small [Loran Gallery](#) and discovered a painter from the early part of last century - Petko Zadgorski (1902-1974).

The Gallery had marked his birthday with a recent exhibition of his work. They also carried on their nice tradition of publishing a catalogue to go with the exhibition and have [quite a few of his paintings for sale on their well-organised website](#).



Zadgorski was born in Sliven but spent most of his life at Burgas where he developed his love of the sea - as you can see from this example of his painting. And the Burgas Municipal Gallery (one of the few I have so far not been able to visit) [has a nice little outline of his work](#)

The Loran Gallery seems to be the best organised of all the private galleries I know - frequent special exhibitions, catalogues to promote the artists, a good reserve of paintings for sale, active website.....Of course The Victoria Gallery, as Sofia's only auction house, [has a great website](#) and catalogue for each of its auctions (there's one on Thursday) when more than 200 artefacts are usually for sale.

Regular readers will know I am a great fan of [Astry Gallery](#) here in Sofia whose owner Vihra Pesheva singlehandedly seeks out and promotes living artists - young and old - with frequent special exhibitions and materials.

But the reason Astry Gallery scores is that so much is crammed into such a small space; that Vihra shares her enthusiasm so readily; and I never feel I am imposing..... This is [what I said last year](#) about the Gallery -

Astry Gallery (under Vihra's tutelage) is unique for me amongst the Sofia galleries in encouraging contemporary Bulgarian painting. Two things are unique - first the frequency of the special exhibitions; but mainly that Vihra follows her passion (not fashion). I am not an art professional - but Vihra has a real art of creating an atmosphere in which people like me can explore. I have been to a couple of other exhibition openings here and they were, sadly, full of what I call "pseuds" - people who talked loudly (mostly Embassy people) and had little interest in the paintings (except perhaps their investment value). Vihra and her Astry Gallery attract real people who share her passion and curiosity. It is always a joy to pop in there - and talk to her, visitors, artists, other collectors and her father.

And that is also the case with Yassen Gollevi of [Konus Gallery](#) who is in his own right a serious painter and teacher at the Art Academy.



Friday, October 18, 2013

## Yovo Yovchev and Yassen Golov - painters to watch!



My great friend Yovo Yovchev of Sofia has had an exhibition these last few weeks - at the Finesse Gallery in Hristo Belchev St just off Solunska St. Here he is with my other great gallerist friend, Yassen Gochev at the exhibition - which, sadly, ends tomorrow.

Yassen's artistry is variously surrealist (oil) and realist (aquarelle and oil) - and you can find him at his Konos Gallery



Yovo was the first guy to introduce me to the great traditions of Bulgarian painting - he sold me my first Emilia Radusheva (I have about



5 now) and was the first person to show me the catalogues of the Victoria Gallery Auction House....and hence help captivate me into the incredible tradition of Bulgarian painting . Tomorrow is the last day of the exhibition - and 3-4 of his paintings have caught my eye.

I managed to buy the second of these.....



Monday, October 21, 2013

## Imagining a future

A space for books, paintings, wine and....ideas? A possible new concept for Sofia -[European City of Culture](#)? As well as conducting my usual haunts of galleries and bookshops here in Sofia, I'm looking at property - and feel that any flat has to be large enough to take my present (let alone future) stock of books and paintings. I found a dream flat - on the edge of a forest a mere 20 minutes' drive (or metro) from the centre - but it's only 70 sq metres; and does not allow the flaneur life I love in the centre of town.

And the second-hand and remaindered books whose titles appealed to me in the last few days (and now lie around the flat) speak powerfully of the importance of serendipity and conversations - eg\_

- [JG Ballard](#)'s dystopian novel [Kingdom Come](#) (2006);
- [Charles Bukowski](#)'s collection of despairing poetry - [War all the time](#) (1984)
- a book about the Anglo-Scottish borderlands between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries - [The Reivers](#);
- Desperately seeking Paradise - journeys of a sceptical muslim (2004) by [Ziauddin Sardar](#);
- [Dinner with Persephone; travels in Greece](#) by Patricia Storace (1996);
- Hungarian Antal Szerb's 1937 masterpiece [Journey by Moonlight](#);
- the final (third) part of Russe-born Nobel-prize winning [Elias Canetti's](#) autobiography [The Play of the Eyes](#) (1986);
- [Half of a Yellow Sun](#) by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie; and
- [The Language Wars; a History of Proper English](#) (2011) by the improbably-named Henry Hitchings

So why not a small gallery space in the centre where I can hang the paintings, display books, offer wines and converse in whatever language.....? Fine for experience - but what would I actually sell - apart from glasses of wine?? The books (eg my extensive collection of about Bulgarian painters) and paintings would not leave the shop but simply be a catalyst for conversation.....

Now that the British Council here has closed its library of books, perhaps there is a place for people to go who wish a taste of European (if not British) culture. I could add French and German books; link with the British butcher and the second-hand English bookshop here; and with cultural centres such as [The Red House](#).....

Dream on.....



Friday, October 25, 2013

## Temptations and turbulence



The beautiful weather continues here in Sofia - 24 yesterday - and, invigorated by the exercises and swim at Rodina hotel, I strolled for some 4 hours visiting my small galleries. First the Absinthe gallery (where I bought the aquarelle above of a view from a window - by a young woman - *Klementina Mancheva*); then Vihra at the Astry Gallery (tempted by this fetching Kostadinov figure in the red dress on the right):

My friend Yassen was showing his latest oil at his Konus gallery; A rarer visit to the Kristal gallery had me tempted by an Alexandrov and a Zhekov; and, finally, a first visit to the Grita gallery just past the Opera for a Vernissaj - one of four apparently which were taking place that evening in the capital.

A lovely little area this last - between the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral and General Dondukov Boulevard - with a tiny gem of a classical disc shop just outside the Opera house on Vrabcha St from which I emerged with 20 odd discs - mainly Dvorak. Incidentally, I was shocked to see the extremist party Ataka

offices prominently sitting ajowl the Opera!!

Earlier I had purchased some charming Bulgarian ceramics and also reproductions of the irresistible Angela Minkova - at Albena's wonderful tiny but joyful shop- Art Magazin at the corner of the Catholic Church and Skobelev St (number 38); and popped into the Raiko Aleksiev gallery on Rakovsky St which turned out to be celebrating the works of one Nikolay Rostovchev (1898-1988).

Rostovchev was an officer in the Russian dragoons who was part of the residue of the White Army which landed in Varna in 1921. In 1925 he enrolled in Boris



Mitov's class at the Art Academy in Sofia and graduated in 1930, exhibiting in the annual exhibitions of the Association of Independent Artists until 1945 - at which point the new communist authorities stripped him of his membership of all associations. His past was against him - not only presumably his time with the White Army but his religious painting during most of the 1930s - for example his work on the St Nedelya Church.

What a turbulent life he had - fleeing from the Bolsheviks only to land up 20-odd years later facing their successors who at least only ostracised him. It was appropriate therefore that the exhibition is in



the Raiko Aleksiev gallery since Aleksiev died in custody a few weeks after the communist takeover.

On this historical note, I was aware of [the slaughter which took place in 1925](#) at the church but had not properly connected it with the [September 1923 communist uprising](#).

I remember passing a monument to communists at the roadside near Vratsa in the north-east of the country - and wondering about it. I posted last year about the massacres which took place in the [communist takeover of September 1944](#) - 70 years ago next year. I wonder how the period will be remembered next year??

My evening finished with another nice discovery as I took a side road back to the flat - a small bookshop which had a copy of a remarkable 500 page book on Bulgaria - [Bulgaria Terra Europeansis Incognita](#) by Ivan Daraktchiev. Original both in its provocative text and superb photos of old ceramics.

Tuesday, November 26, 2013

## [Kruchma and chibouk](#)



I have to confess to a taste for cigars - indulged in private. About one a day. Even worse, I admire the remnants of the tobacco culture one finds here in Bulgaria - the brazenness with which the owners of the tiny shops which line the narrow streets of Sofia city centre squat on their doorsteps and smoke the weed and drink their coffee.

I have become an avid collector of [the aquarelles of Grigor Naidenov](#) who celebrated the café culture here of the inter-war and post-war years.

[Balkan smoke - tobacco and the making of modern Bulgaria](#) paints a fascinating picture of the role of tobacco in the social, economic and political life of

modern Bulgaria. It's by [Mary Neuburger](#)

*It was not until the nineteenth century that Bulgarians began to enter the Muslim coffeehouse, where they conducted commerce and local administration, read newspapers, and engaged in debate. It was then that they learned to smoke, as they came of age politically and culturally, and as their national movement gained momentum. Indeed, over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, smoking, like the tobacco industry itself, drove social change, accompanying and even propelling a certain "coming of age" for social groups who joined the ranks of passionate smokers.*

*As Bulgarians entered the coffeehouse at home, they also began to frequent European cafes and discover themselves as "Bulgarians" abroad, amidst the intellectual ferment of Paris, Vienna, and St. Petersburg. Soon Bulgarians began to establish coffeehouses at home that took on increasingly European characteristics, mainly aesthetically. For example, the traditional hookah was replaced by the newly minted cigarette. Coffeehouses became places of intellectual and cultural activity, and tobacco became a muse for generations of the Bulgarian elite. In the interwar period, in particular, the coffeehouse was at the heart of intellectual life, though other kinds of smoke-filled venues mushroomed in the Bulgarian capital and elsewhere in Bulgaria.*

*Smoking became the quintessential modern habit, a necessary accoutrement for the modern man and eventually woman, in both the sober coffeehouse and the drunken tavern. Women and youth slowly*

*entered this world of public smoking in the course of twentieth century, a fact that impelled anti-smoking impulses (however meagre).*

*In some respects this is a familiar story, with obvious global parallels, yet the Bulgarian context continually reveals its own particular nuances. In pre-1945 Bulgaria, for example, anti-smoking impulses flowed from two rather disparate sources, American (and Bulgarian convert) Protestants and the communist left. Both had a radical vision for "moral uplift" and social reform and utopian visions of the future. But both were also, in a sense, foreign, and so faced local and official hostility in the period before 1945. Most Bulgarians simply did not want to give up their new found pleasures, and the state was an important beneficiary of tobacco industry revenues and consumption taxes.*

*In the post World War II period, the dramatic change to a communist form of government brought an entirely new set of practical and theoretical quandaries. The Bulgarian tobacco industry took off, producing ever greater numbers of increasingly luxurious cigarettes for the enormous "captive" Soviet and Bloc market.*

*There was also a veritable explosion of state built and run restaurants, cafes, hotels and sea-side resorts in the later decades of period, as the state sought legitimacy by providing the "good life" to its workers. By the 1960s and 1970s, however, communist state-directed abstinence efforts emerged, along with heightened concerns over the growing numbers of smoking women and youth. The Bulgarian communists continually connected smoking to "western" moral profligacy and "remnants" of a capitalist past, as well as "Oriental" degeneracy—or Bulgaria's backwards, Ottoman past. Yet the state continued to provide cheap cigarettes and places to smoke them as never before. Bulgarian smoking rates skyrocketed under communism and the period generated a society of smokers for whom the voice of abstinence was just another form of state propaganda.*

A reference in the text to the famous Bulgarian writer Ivan Vazov's [Under the Yoke](#) has encouraged me to read this classic novel about life under the Ottomans in the late 19th century.

NB Kruchma was a village tavern where long pipes (Chibouks) were smoked before being replaced by cigarettes. The same bakal (shop) in villages would be a kafene during the day and kruchma in the evening - with rakia replacing the coffee and cigarettes the chibouks of an earlier age.

## 9. Introducing the Realists

"Very recently a prominent Bulgarian assured me that water colors by the leading Bulgarian artists are second to none in Europe and when I showed some reluctance in accepting so sweeping a judgment, my interlocutor "guaranteed" me that his statement was perfectly accurate and offered to prove it by comparing the best Bulgarian paintings one by one with the best of the contemporary European masters. Being unacquainted with the European masters I accepted the guarantee on faith, though even yet I am a bit doubtful.

Nevertheless, I was very much impressed by the fact that a lawyer, who had given much of his life to politics and was at that moment engaged in trying to improve Bulgarian agriculture, should be so much interested in art".

RH Markham ([Meet Bulgaria](#) 1931)



Plus ça change.....It was only in 2007/08 when I was living and working in Bulgaria for the first time that I stumbled on the landscapes and seascapes painted by the Bulgarian painters who were working in the early and middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I had the same reaction as Markham all of 75 years earlier (although it is only recently that I came across his comments). I thought the paintings beautiful - and affordable - and have found myself an art collector! Of not only 100 works of the older school in my collection but of various young contemporaries I also admire.

And it wasn't just a question of quality. It was also the sheer number of painters - dead and alive. I had the sense that, pro rata, Bulgarians has more painters, cartoonists and sculptors than other countries.

And yet Bulgarian painters generally (let alone of this particular period) are not well known abroad. Hardly surprising when no book exists (or seems ever to have been published) about Bulgarian painting in the English language. A book on "contemporary bulgarian painting" was apparently published in English in 1996 but is out of print. The incredible Posada art bookshop in Brussels had Europe's largest collection of artbooks and, in 2010, I could find (and buy) there only a 1947 edition of *Art Moderne Bulgare* (French) published by the (then) new Ministry of Culture

I hope this book will help change that. Its aim is to introduce "modern realist" Bulgarian painting to visitors and to encourage them to spend time (and perhaps some money) browsing the galleries here. You will be received in a very friendly way - all the more so if you show that you know something about the Bulgarian painters.

It is written by a complete amateur - someone with absolutely no art training or skills but who, for the past few decades, has always put a visit to the municipal art gallery at the top of his list when visiting the various cities of Europe (and central Asia) - for example

- Berlin in the early 1960s (to discover the pre-war works of Grosz and Kollwitz and 19th century realists such as Adolf Menzel);

- Brussels in the mid 1980s (to be moved by the 16th century Flemish art - and late 19th century realists);
- Istanbul in the late 1980s (and the delight of their miniaturists and calligraphists)
- the stunning Hermitage in Leningrad in January 1991 (the Russian Itinerants); and
- Tashkent in the early 2000s (for the Asian side of Soviet art).

Of course most of these paintings are figurative whereas what I initially fell in love with here in Bulgaria are the paintings of their land- and sea- scape artists. Perhaps that it nostalgia for my home country, Scotland, which I left 20 years ago - and the glorious landscapes painted in Victorian times by people like John Knox and William MacTaggart and, in the early part of the 20th century by the Glasgow Boys and Colourists.

I have lived in Sofia on and off since summer 2007; have a mountain house in the Romanian Carpathians; and blog regularly - not least about Bulgarian paintings. I do therefore have some terms of comparison - which strengthen my conviction that Bulgaria has something very special to offer the visitor.

This does not pretend to be a comprehensive guide to the painters who have been active in Bulgaria in the past 100 years. There are so many painters that that would be a difficult task even for a Bulgarian! Its purpose is rather

- to give a sense of what "realist" (as distinct from abstract) Bulgarian painters of this period offer
- to encourage visitors to Bulgaria to visit both the private and municipal art galleries - where, as a foreigner, you are generally received as a VIP;
- and to inspire you to make your own discoveries and purchases.

The list of painters therefore goes far beyond that of the well known painters - Zlatyu Boiadjiev; Vadimir Dmitrova (Maistora); Ivan Mrkvichka, Nikola Petrov; Benko Obrshekov; Nikola Taney; Jaroslav Vesin, and Mario Zhekov, for example, whose names you should certainly have memorised if you wish to impress the dealers. You will not be able to afford their prices - but mentioning them will certainly establish your credibility!

My selection criteria are beauty and "affordability" - and the list includes therefore artists who would not necessarily be rated by art critics.

Bulgarian art, as Markham recognised in 1931, is a comparatively new creation — almost as new as the state itself (1878). *"To be sure, there were ikon paintings of a rather high order a hundred years ago. Likewise, a number of first rate artists appeared even before the liberation, at the same time that the awakening nation was beginning to print books and papers, to give theatrical performances and to insist on having mass sung in their own language. Yet practically all the art productions worth mentioning have been created since the nation won its freedom"*. Perhaps this is one of the things which accounts for the freshness of its paintings in the early decades of the 20th Century.

This book lists some 200 painters from the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and tries, in a few lines, to capture their significance. This wasn't easy - I first have to put the artist's name in Cyrillic script and then copy and paste on Bulgarian google - then google translate what seem to be

promising entries. Then there is the problem that these give the barest facts (except long lists of exhibitions and honours which add not a jot to our understanding of the person!) And it goes without saying that most art "criticism" is gobbledegook...

What I need is a sense of the character - how they lived their lives.....the friends they had. I am, for example, very fond of [Gregor Naidenov's aquarelles of café life](#) in Sofia in the 1930-1950s - but, so far, have been unable to find out anything about the man.

But I was impressed with a book on Boris Denev which included lovely black and white photographs of him with friends and in various studios and exhibitions....also a recent book on a [classic Bulgarian photographer, Stoyan Sertev](#) which not only reproduced many of the old photographs (including lovely ones of Nicola Taney) but included a CD of the quartet he led.

I have [a growing library of art books](#) both from that period and contemporary - and their silences and gaps speak volumes.

As, indeed, I sorted them for the bookshelves of the 1930s flat I now have in old Sofia, I began to have the feeling that I was living amongst those who had departed this life.....but who had left marvellous memories..... and were in that sense still alive.....



Paintings speak in different ways to each of us - although that doesn't stop art critics and historians from imposing a lot of words and noise on us.

I don't know about you - but, whenever I see a painting which I like, I always want to know something about the painter. Where did (s)he grow up? Where were they trained? What were the defining inspirations and influences?

And Bulgaria is particularly interesting for the art lover since it was under Communist rule for 45 years - and the artist played an important (but difficult) role in communist regimes. Bulgaria had a fair number of leftist political caricaturists in the first half of the century - who might have been expected to welcome the advent of a more progressive regime. Some flourished - others suffered. One, Rayko Aleksiev, was imprisoned and quickly died under suspicious circumstances in the immediate aftermath of the communist takeover. Painters who did not toe the official line had simple choices - migration (geographical or professional); banishment or compromise. Many painters chose to go into theatre design or cinema. Some, like Boris Denev, Konstantin Shtarkelov and Nikolai Boiadjiev, found themselves banned from painting - let alone exhibiting.

Maria Vassileva - Chief Curator of the wonderful Sofia City Gallery - gives an excellent introduction to Bulgarian painting on [the Gallery's website](#).

This, in my view, is best read after you have seen a few of the paintings - but these excerpts identify some of the key figures -



*The earliest post-Liberation artists (Ivan Mrkvichka, Anton Mitov, Jaroslav Vešin, and Ivan Anghelov) bear testimony to the changes in Bulgarian painting that were setting in during this period. The individual human being was no longer at the centre of the artist's quests. These were directed towards the depiction of the real world with all its variety and tangible concreteness. The people's way of life was considered a sign of fidelity to the national cause suited to keep up the spirits of the people. ...The landscape plays nearly as important a part as the human figures. These canvases belong to the earliest attempts at plein air painting. The artist is fascinated by the effects of sunlight, the transparency of the air, the play of shadows cast by the trees. While the figures are depicted with meticulous accuracy, the landscape setting is distinguished by a certain ethereal quality, sketchiness of treatment and luminosity. The same is true of Ivan Mrkvichka's *Going to Market*, one of his classical genre paintings, in which the artist's attention is focused on the subject-matter and the costume of the central character, but no less on the winter landscape, which envelops the scene and occupies the greater part of the canvas.....*

*Besides genre painting, portraiture continued to evolve as a favoured art form. Both Mrkvichka and Mitov have painted portraits; Mitov's *Self-portrait* is a widely known work....*

*The earliest serious attempts to break away from the old academic line in painting date from the early twentieth century. The founding of the *Savremenno Izkoustvo* (Contemporary Art) Society in 1903-4 was an expression precisely of these trends characterized by the interest not only in subject-matter but also in plastic values and by the desire to apply certain of the lessons of West-European painting. Nikola Mihailov, Tseno Todorov, Stefan Ivanov, Nikola Petrov, Elena Karamihailova rank among the notable artists of this period.*

*Most of the younger Bulgarian landscape painters were pupils of Jaroslav Vešin and developed further his achievements.*

*The most significant development during this period was the definite breaking away from academism and the increasingly strong and fruitful influence of Impressionism, which affected most Bulgarian artists to a higher or lesser degree - Nikola Petrov, Yordan Kyuvliev, Nikola Tanev, Assen Belkovski, Konstantin Shturkelov, Alexander Moutafov, Atanas Mihov, Marin Georgiev-Oustagenov, Vladimir Dimitrov-Chiraka, Peter Morozov.*

*Elissaveta Konsoulova-Vazova and Elena Karamihailova have created a gallery of intimate and psychologically penetrating portraits. Having both received their academic training abroad, these two women artists had not only a rich artistic career, but also exerted a considerable impact on the development of painting during the first half of the century. Their works evidence the mixed influences of German Romanticism and German Impressionism.*

Vassileva's list contains the "top 20" as it were of the early period - ie those born in the last part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Mihov, Moutafov and Tanev are three of my favourites - although I'm not able to afford a Tanev. But I would certainly have included Boris Denev - of one of whose 1935 paintings I proudly acquired recently (this is a great painting of Plovdiv which will be European City of Culture in 2019).

Other artists whose names I would include in my roll-call of honour are Nenko Balkanski, Vasil Barakov, Nikola Boiadjev, Zlatyu Boiadjev, Dobro Dobrev, Kolyo Kolev, Christo Kriskaretz, Vera Lukova, Kiril Mateev, Grigor Naidenov, Ilyia Petrov, Christo Rubev, Stanio Stam-atov, Boris Stefchev, Kiril Tsonev, Ivan Trichkov, Stoian Vasilev, Mario Zhekov and, of course, such satirists as Ilyia Beshkov and Stoian Venev.

I realise it is difficult to classify painters - many are versatile; or change their style over time; and I don't want to use terms which baffle (eg post-impressionist).

This is a book about the painting style I like - and the word for that seems to be "realism" - the style which tries to portray a likeness rather than an abstraction (and that includes caricaturists and impressionists). It includes -

- urban and rural landscape
- seascape
- Figurative (includes portraits)
- Graphic - particularly satire
- Still life

## 10. Getting to see the richness of Bulgarian art

### 10.1 Sofia

The National Gallery is worth a visit - although its exhibited collection is not very large and it never seems to circulate the paintings. The City Art Gallery, on the other hand, is very imaginatively run - and is free!

**One of the many delights of Sofia is the profusion of its small, friendly galleries in the centre - the majority displaying modern art but a handful concentrating on the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century artists who are the focus of this booklet.** If you are serious in your search for particular artists, most of the owners will be able, in a day or so, to let you have a look at some which are on the market. The Annexes gives all the detail...

### 10.2 The regional municipal galleries

Bulgaria has an excellent network of municipal art galleries, details of which are given in the Annex. All operate under tight budget conditions - which means that few can even afford heating in the winter. But, as a foreigner, you will receive a very warm reception in the regional galleries - each of which has its own local painting heroes.

### 10.3 Sofia City Gallery - a case study

The special exhibitions of Sofia City Art Gallery play an important role in Bulgaria in bringing together the paintings of people like Dobro Dobrev, Nikola Boiadjev (to mention 2 recent events) from the various municipal and private museums in the country. But the Sofia gallery has a large collection of Bulgarian art (3,500 pieces) and how therefore to ensure that they see the light of day?

In 2010, the Gallery curator Dr. Maria Vasileva started a series ("The other Eye") to overcome the problem - which consists of inviting outsiders to comb the dungeons of the gallery where the collections are stored, strip off the protective covering and select some paintings.

I just missed the first two exhibitions of such works - selected by an artist Luchezar Boyadjev and a philosopher Boyan Manchev. The small booklet which accompanied the second exhibition tells of Boyadjev expecting to find a large section of the museum's collection covering major events - whether historical or personal). Instead "the representation of various aspects of people's private world obviously prevails, there being, conditionally speaking, an "idyllic" thread running through the works, which unifies all those aspects through the representation of elements of everyday living,

which are not directly related to either big moments in history and monumental events, or to essential existential and metaphysical issues such as life, death, birth, violence, suffering, etc."

The third exhibition was of artefacts selected by 43 prominent Bulgarian art and cultural historians belonging to different generations and fields of work (lecturers, researchers, museum curators, directors of art galleries, museums and nongovernmental organizations, art critics, curators and freelance researchers.

Those interested in contemporary art can find the work of more than 200 on this [Modern Bulgarian Artists](#) website - although two of my favourites Milcho Kostadinov and Yuliana Sotirova are not on the list.

## 11. Resources on Bulgarian Painting and Painters

This section is for those whose appetite has been whetted so far - and lists some of the more substantial books which are available,

Five great sources are **freely available to download** on the internet -

- [Socialist construction in the work of Bulgarian artists](#) (Sofia 1954)
- [Iliya Beshkov 1901-1958](#) (2006) - to mark the 105<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birthday of Bulgaria's master caricaturist, Pleven Art Gallery (named in Beshkov's honour) published this lovely little book
- [The Art Collection of the National Bank of Bulgaria](#) (2009) 143 pages of beautiful illustrations
- [The Treasures of Varna City Art Gallery](#) (2013) - all 136 pages of superb reproductions.
- [Kazanlak Art Gallery's](#) offerings (don't be put off by the strange list which initially confronts you!)

Three books which give a great overview of the tradition of Bulgarian painting of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century can be bought here in Sofia are -

- [A Possible History - Bulgarian art through the collection of Sofia City ArtGallery](#) . It's 200 pages of material well organised into the various time-periods with appropriate selections of reproductions and short Dimitar Gachev (bilingual) intros to each period - costs 25 leva
- Last year the Bulgarian Union of Artists gave us a curious 350 pages (in English) - [Bulgarian Art - 120 Years](#) (2013) with 350 pages and costing a whopping 120 leva. It's a history of the various artistic associations - with reproductions - but gives absolutely no information about the individual artists. The text gives technical and very boring details of the various splits which occurred - with no attempt made to explain the significance or reasons for the changes.
- The Academy of Art recently offered a marvellous catalogue to accompany its current, rather small, exhibition of some of the items from its extensive archives - *Painting Collection (1896-1940)* (Museum Collection of the National Academy of Art) (2014) It's 190 full page reproductions with a very short and general (bilingual) introduction and costs a very reasonable 25 leva.

But the one problem with all of these publications is that virtually no information is given about the individual artists (in whatever language)!

Four other very good and substantial catalogues are -

- *The Stara Zagora municipal gallery collection* (2007) - about 200 pages with nice outlines of the artists (including a short English summary)
- *Bulgarian artists and Munich* (City Gallery 2009) - German and Bulgarian
- *The Association of New Artists 1931-1944* (Sofia City Gallery 2012) - with short (bilingual) summaries of the artists
- *City Art Gallery's Catalogue* (2003) - 500 pages of postage-size black and white reproductions and brief bilingual blurbs about the artists. Now I think out of print.

Those who read Bulgarian can access a large Dictionary of Bulgarian artists which was produced some decades ago but there does not seem to be a introduction to Bulgarian art for the generalist (even Bulgarian) who wants to know something about the life of the artists - including how they dealt with communism.

*The question, of course, is what exactly does information about an artist's life add to our appreciation of his/her actual output - be it a novel, painting or [piece of music](#)?*

Most people would argue for a separation of the works from the life. One can (like Brecht or Dali) be a bit obnoxious as a person but still admirable as an artist.

But I certainly enjoy biographies such as the recent one by Hilary Spurling of [Matisse](#) for the light they throw on the choices artists make or the influence of family and friends. The book on Matisse, for example, helped me understand his use of bright colours - they were the surroundings of his daily life as he grew up in a Belgian silk town!

And I particularly value the black and white photographs of the artists - whether in streets or in their studios..... here, for example, is the striking figure of the "Master" of Bulgarian painting - Vladimir Dmitrov.....



### Websites

Two auction websites have excellent archives of paintings. These are [ArtPrice.BG](#) and the [Victoria gallery](#) in Sofia. But be aware that the Bulgarian habit is to list by first name - not family name! And, although they give useful information on price, there is little information about the artists themselves.

The [website of Sofia City Art Gallery](#) has an excellent overview of Bulgarian painting - which I have already mentioned. It also stores information on each special exhibition it has held since 2001 - and this proved an excellent source of detailed information on a few artists.

The Loran Gallery in Sofia has a webpage with [pictures of a lot of artists](#) - a nice little feature when it's so difficult to read as much about their lives as you might wish to....

The delightful (private) [Phillipopolis Gallery in old Plovdiv also has a website](#) with a small archive of painting. It's housed in a glorious old house in old Plovdiv.

There is also [this \(rather curious\) list of painters](#) whose work can be seen in galleries here.....

Apart from the intro on the Sofia City art gallery, I have been able so far to find only three articles in English about Bulgarian painting - a rather academic piece ([Images of Modernity](#)) about developments at the turn of the 19th century and early 20<sup>th</sup>; another piece a [charming chapter of Markham's 1931 book](#); and, finally, this nice piece on [8 famous Bulgarian illustrators](#).

**Annex 4** lists about 50 books about individual Bulgarian artists which I have been able to pick up from various places (not least the antique shops) and which are now part of a growing library I have on the subject.

The quotation which heads chapter 5 is from the 1931 book by an American journalist based in Sofia makes the point of how impressed he was by the fact that a busy lawyer active in politics should be so interested in art....but I think it's in the Bulgarian blood.....

Even present-day young people, I find, know the names of long-dead Bulgarian artists..... painting, sculpture, ceramics.....there seem more artists per head of the population than in most other countries.....

And certainly they seem to produce more books about painters.....

Serious bibliophiles should visit the Atelier Svetlin Roussev on Vratscha St just beneath the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral which, in addition to the fascinating collection, has a great art library.



## 12. Two Hundred of the Best!

The first edition of this booklet listed some 140 painters who had come to my notice - the intervening three years or so has allowed me to add another 60 names. And every few weeks I will come across another painter whose name deserves a place.....

In the following list, I try to say something about -

- Date and place of birth - and year of death
- Where they trained - sometimes under which artists
- Genre
- Main places of work - and influences (such as close artist friends and/or membership of Associations of artists)
- Price

It has not been easy to get this information - usually it has meant a tortuous process of getting the Cyrillic name of the artist from the google translate and then copying that into the Bulgarian google search engine. My automatic translate then gives me an immediate translation - most of which I have then edited down for the list. My apologies for the residuals left of the original..... let alone the different styles of the entries....

*With the 40 pages which follow in your hand as you visit Bulgaria's galleries, you will amaze their curators with the breadth and depth of your knowledge; establish yourself as a worthy customer; and, who knows, by virtue of that fact negotiate a chunk off the asking prices.....*



### **Note on Listing and Spelling;**


The Cyrillic alphabet has more letters than ours and the order of the letters in the Bulgarian ([or Russian](#)) language is not the same as "romantic" languages. For example they have 2 "B"s, the second of which is actually pronounced V. This makes the listing of artists' names confusing for English speakers. Bulgarian lists are also confusing since the list is often constructed using the first rather than the family name.

The final difficulty is what is called the "[transliteration](#)" problem - there are actually different ways in which the English equivalent of the Bulgarian name can be constructed since the vowel we would expect is often missing from the cyrillic. Take the artist Shtarkelov - or should it be Shturkeloff....or Shtrkeloff...?

**Note on terminology;** the "State Drawing School" was opened in Sofia in 1896. In 1908 it is renamed "The State Industrial School of the Fine Arts" which changed, in 1921, to "The State Academy of Fine Arts". In 1954 it changed again to - "The Higher Institute of Fine Arts Nikolay Pavlovitch". In 1996 it was declared by government decree as "The National Academy of Fine Arts". Following the Scottish tradition I have often shortened the name to Sofia School of Art.

## 200 of the best - gaining the dealers' attention!

Artist	Dates	Focus	Location of birth, training; genre; some recent prices
Abadjiev Petko	1913-2004	Landscapes	Born in Karlovo. Colleague of Nikola Taney and, like him, a great colourist. He paints scenes from Karlovo, Plovdiv and the Black Sea  A nice painting of his went unsold at a recent Victoria auction - reserve price 325 euros
Alsheh, Eliezer	1908-1983	landscape, portrait	Born Vidin. Graduated 1933 from the Sofia School of Art. His first exhibition in Sofia in 1934 caused some outrage for its "pictorial boldness" - but he was supported by other artists such as Kiril Tsonev. Worked for some time as a house-painter in Palestine but came back to a second, much more successful exhibition in Sofia - the proceeds of which allowed him to spend 3 months in Paris. Spent only 10 years in BG - some in concentration camp. The new communist regime was hostile to his work and he emigrated in 1951 to Argentina
Alekov, Napoleon	1912-2002	seascapes	born Tulcea, Romania and came to Bulgaria at age 2. A prolific painter, he apparently left about 10,000 paintings and had 25 exhibitions. <a href="http://artprice.bg/art_targ_list.php?autor_id=506">http://artprice.bg/art_targ_list.php?autor_id=506</a>  from 300 euros
<b>Alexandrov Zhdravko</b>  1911-1999 Landscape			Born Mokresh, Lom. Master of rural and industrial landscapes. Graduated from Sofia Art School in 1935 - under Professor Zahariev. Three years later, presents his first solo exhibition - the fruit of a year's work in Smolyan and Raikovo. Inspired by the awesome beauty and majesty of the mountains, these early works already reveal his creative gifts  Recent large painting 50x70 went unsold at reduced price of 1,300 euros    <a href="http://www.gallery-victoria.com/viewentity.asp?Entity=96">http://www.gallery-victoria.com/viewentity.asp?Entity=96</a>
Andonov, Nikola Kostov	1887-1981	Figures, still life	Superb realism of peasant life <a href="http://www.gallery-victoria.com/viewentity.asp?Entity=117">http://www.gallery-victoria.com/viewentity.asp?Entity=117</a>
Angeloushev Boris	1902-1966	graphic	Born and grew up in Plovdiv; trained in Berlin Art Academy in the early 1920s and was clearly influenced by the revolutionary events taking place then and by the powerful graphics of Kathe Kollwitz.. Returned to Bulgaria in 1935. For some examples, see <a href="http://www.gallery-victoria.com">http://www.gallery-victoria.com</a>  possible to get sketch for 200 euros

<b>Anghelov, Ivan</b>	1864-1924		Born Brestnica. 1882-86 Munich Art Academy. 1888/89 studied in Rome before returning to teach in Sliven and Plovdiv until 1890. Then teacher at the newly opened State Drawing School in Sofia. Exhibited extensively in Europe. Made large impact in the period.
<b>Balkanski Nenko</b> 1907 -1977 Figurative; landscapes  Born Kazanluk. graduated from Sofia Art School in 1930.  He then went to study in Germany, France and later Italy.  He seems to have been a modest man and his portrayals of family life were well regarded by the socialist authorities who used his work on stamps.  A large still life of his is priced at 3,000 euros in a recent auction.			
<b>Balkanski, Pencho</b>	1908-1985	Photographer and Landscape painter	Born Lovets, Troyan area In 1923 comes to Sofia School of Art and works in photographic studio of his brother. In 1930 has his first photo exhibition with portraits of Tzvetana Tabakova. His photo lab 'Luna' is a legend – he's an inspired entertainer in all genres, in which works - paintings, graphics, photography.  In 1936 he had photographic exhibitions in Vienna. friends are David Perez, George Papazov, Vasil Ivanov, Nayden Petkov, Georgi Velchev, Daniel Dechev  In 1958, his work was declared unacceptable and he left for Vienna and Paris where he meets friends such as Peretz, Nayden Petkov and anya Decheva.  In 1978, seventy-year old anniversary makes a retrospective exhibition featuring works from the last three decades.  expect to pay almost 1,000 euros
<b>Banchev, Iakim</b>  1884-1967 Portrait, war, landscape graphic  Born Lovech - secondary school in Gabrovo, where he was friends with Georgi Mitov (brother of Anton Mitov (and a graduate of the Academy in Turin), then to Sofia, where February 18, 1903 was admitted to the National School of Drawing in the studio painting of Ivan Markvichka and Ivan Angelov. Autumn of the same year he was part of the student flow to the Art Academy in Dresden, where he stays until March 1904. When he goes to Turin. This is his last stop - at least for the next five years.  Graduated (1905) painting at the Art Academy in Turin (Italy). As a student takes part in an exhibition in Turin (1905) with his work "Nude" and received First Prize (the picture is located in the Turin Museum).			



Returned to his native Lovech. Brought with him his paintings from his workshops in the academies, today a significant portion of it is lost. A few of his paintings are purchased in the early 50s by Sofia City Gallery,

Military archives gives us information on the involvement of travelers in the Balkan War in 1913, as well as mobilization, and its inclusion in the ranks of the seventeenth Infantry Regiment during the First World War. It is in these troubled years formed his second great creative period, which creates dozens of large-scale canvasses immortalized horror of war (now part of the collection of the Museum of Military History in Sofia).

Took part in two organized exhibitions with his paintings of military subjects, he attempted to become involved directly in organized artistic life in the country. At the end of 1919 is part of the initiative group of the Society of Independent Artists, of which, however, never became a member nor even took part in its first exhibition.

Not find a place for himself in his homeland, he made a decisive move and headed across the Atlantic, where dreams can be realized as an architect. Shouldering a small suitcase and a modest folder with drawings, he migrated alone in July 1923

and settled in Manhattan. His hopes to find work as an architect quickly evaporate.

Forced to go back to his painting, he earns enough money to return to his beloved Mina. But in 1925, financial difficulties and problems in the family back home in Bulgaria, which two years later force him to leave again, but this time without great expectations.

In the period from July 1927 to July 1933 Bancheva family lives in the US and the amount of savings made portraits allowed him to return to BG and buy in Sofia a property at *5a "August 11" St (just below the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral and across the road from the Atelier Svetlin Roussev).*

He designed his own studio on the top floor of the same building

In his remaining more than three decades of life Jakim Banchev he worked in the pharmaceutical office of his brother Ivan. After Sept 1944 he withdrew from artistic work partly because of the change in tastes but mostly because of his bourgeois past. Despite attempts after the political changes in the country to adapt and to participate in exhibitions, his works were never admitted. *"As a kind of reward for his modest nature, UBA accepts one work in 1949 but doesn't display it. He sank into the solitude of his own studio, where he painted and then destroyed the works to avoid trouble - Sometimes doing portraits on order for a ministerial office with pictures of Botev, Levski Georgi Dimitrov. Portraits not signed. Jakim Banchev meets death on the doorstep of his home on January 19, 1967".*

There was a short TV programme tribute about the [exhibition which runs at the Emanouliya Gallery 2014/2015](#)

## Barakov Vasil

1902-1991

landscape

born Kazanluk. - and graduated after an apparently turbulent time from the State Academy of Arts in 1937. One of first to paint industrial landscapes. Part of a group consisting of David Peretz, himself and N Boaidjiev known as BARATZI.

Exhibited widely in Athens, Belgrade, Berlin, Budapest, Bucharest, Vienna and Moscow. An uncompromising artist, he suffered poverty - but did enjoy some honours in 1963 and 1976.

His paintings are generally sombre.

70x60 sold for 2,000 euros in 2011



## Behar, Marko



1914-1973

graphic, satire

Born in village in Yambol, schooled Burgas where his family moved in 1927, No early art education, he worked initially in the retail trade in Sofia in 1935 and had a first exhibition in 1940 by which time he was active in the communist movement.

He spent 1941/42 and 1943/44 in a Jewish Labour camp. 46-49 he worked for the (Starshel) Hornet magazine

It was the 1950s before he was able to start an art education (in Leningrad) and returned to Bulgaria in 1957 to become Deputy-Editor of Starshel

1958-63 he was an instructor in the problems of art at the Central Committee of the Communist Party

Belkovsky, Assen	1879-1957	landscape portraits	born Assenovgrad, he studied at the state drawing school from 1896-99 after which he spent 4 years at Kazan art academy (Russia) - followed by a year at St Petersburg art academy. Then some teaching at Munich and a visit to Paris.  He returned to Bulgaria in 1907 - and engaged in restoration work and art criticism
Bellstoinev Georgi	1909-	aquarellist	Born Samokov

## Beshkov, Ilia

1901- 1958

Graphics; cartoons

born in a small town near Pleven. In 1918-1920, he studied at the Faculty of Law of Sofia University and briefly returned home as a teacher. In 1921, he enrolled in painting at the Sofia School of Art and graduated in 1926.

As a student, Beshkov published caricatures in the Maskarad, Div Dyado, Balgaran, Starshel and Vik magazines and illustrated the issues of the T. F. Chipev and Hemus printing houses. From 1925 on, he co-operated with the Pladne magazine among others. He was twice arrested due to his leftist political views: once after participating in the June uprising following the [Bulgarian coup d'état of 1932](#) and then during 1925 in the wake of the [St Nedelya Church assault](#)

In 1930, Beshkov became a member of the Narodno Izkustvo movement. He was from the founders of the famous newspaper Sturshel (Hornet) in 1940, and published in it without signature or pseudonym.

One of his best known comic characters was 'Spekulanta Maks'. In 1945, he became a lecturer of drawing, illustration and print design at the National Academy of Fine Art; he was elected a tenured professor in 1953 and led the Department of Graphics until his death in 1958 in Sofia.





Beshkov's political caricatures were noted for their sarcasm and deep connotations. His works were humanist, democratic, revolutionary and national in nature. The Pleven art gallery is named in his honour and most of his works are exhibited there. sketches not difficult to find for 200 euros

[Nice video here](#) - in Bulgarian and [superb E-book](#)

Boiadjiev, Hristo	1912-2001		Studied at the Sofia Academy with future big names in Bulgarian art eg Zlatyu Boyadziev Vladimir Kavaldjiev Vasil Barakov and others. Studied under George Karakashev and others. " Girl in golden ochre " received an award at graduation of the artist. Remained until the end of his life in Pleven, became one of those honorable labourers of art in which creative and enlightened spirit is fully alive, and without which the picture of Bulgarian art from the first half of the twentieth century would not be complete
Boyadziev Nikolay	1904-1963	Figurative, landscape	Born in Svishtov where he quickly developed an aptitude for drawing. Graduated from the State High School in Commerce there and was sent by the family to continue his economic studies in Sofia. He decided, however, at short notice to try for enrolment at Sofia Art School and emerged in 1925 in the top few of those qualifying - despite his lack of preparation. He studies in Boris Mitov's studio and graduated in 1930.  From 1932, he was an art teacher in Shumen High School and attracted increasing fame. In 1942 an article compared his colouring with that of Rubens and spoke of his "great style, acute sense of tone, clarity of technique and pronounced individuality" In 1951 he became a teacher at the Sofia Art School. Expelled in 1958 from Union of Bulgarian artists for his refusal to work on prescribed themes, he increasingly focussed on drawing.  Superb charcoal and pencil portrait work - an underrated artist, his work s are not easy to find.
Boaidjiev, Petar	1907-1963	sea and landscape	a superb and underrated artist - one of my real favourites for collecting. I have three - including the oen which graces the opening page <a href="http://auction-victoria.com/viewentity.asp?Entity=109">http://auction-victoria.com/viewentity.asp?Entity=109</a>
Boiadjiev, Tsenko	1902-1972	portraits, landscapes	born Totleben village, Pleven 1928-32 zagreb
Borov, Yordan	1904-1962		Born Dryanovo, Kazanluk 1932 graduated (Zahariev Bodhov)

### Boyadziev, Zlatyu

1903-1976

Folk art

Born Brezovo, Plovdiv Region.

Known sometimes as the Bulgarian Breughel.

His work is divided into two very different periods due to stroke and partial paralysis of the right side in (1951). The first period is characterized by stylistic influences typical of Dutch paintings from the XVI-XVII century The second period is characterized by fabulous, often symbolic images and compositions of rural life.

He graduated Painting at the Art Academy - Sofia (1932), under Professor Zeno Todorov .



In the first period Zlatyu Boyadziev created the most valuable paintings, most of them in the big state museums. This is a high European painting applied to our reality. If one of the greatest European artists walked on our land and painted Bulgarian life. "Brezovski shepherds" (1941), "In the Field" (1943), "Svinarka" (1945) "Mini Pernik" (1945), "Brigade" (1947) and others. portraits Zlatyu Boyadziev feature precise and concise pattern, solid modeling of forms and deep insight into the character portrayed: "Portrait of the artist's father" (1940), "Mother ia artist" (1940), "Family Portrait" (1941), "Portrait of a Young Girl" (1941 ) and the like.

Following a stroke in 1951 Zlatyu Boyadziev became paralyzed and no longer painted. He then began frescoing with his left hand disparate works. A hundred compositions, portraits and landscapes with pronounced expression and drama - others are filled cover



plate of strange characters, is often fraught with symbolic meaning: "Brezovo Village" (1959), "to the slaughterhouse." Slowly but confidently Boyadziev began to paint with his left hand. feat that is not within the reach of everyone. Some his masterpieces like "Rhodope wedding", "April Uprising", "Return of the hunt" and "Apocalypse" - in various versions - were created then.

He died on February 2, 1976 in Plovdiv. After November 10 Zlatyu Boyadziev becomes an obsession for collectors and is the most counterfeited Bulgarian artist. According to some newspapers, Plovdiv has a whole factory of his works. Usually imitates the second period Boiadzhiev because artistry is in the first reach of counterfeiters.

<http://alneg008.blogspot.com/2013/02/1903-1976.html>

65x50 fetched 15,000 euros in March 2011

Bozhilov-  
Slona Georgi

1935-2001

modernist

Strictly not a realist

**Bozhinov, Alexander**

1878-1968

cartoonist

born Svistov, educated Russe, he laid the basis for Bulgaria's strong tradition of caricaturists. He studied drawing at the newly opened state school from 1896-1899 and went in 1901 to Munich where he stayed frequently during the next 20 years, being influenced by the Simplicissimus magazine there. He edited from 1904-09 Sofia's satirical magazine „Balgaren“.

Paintings not easy to find - although this one sold for 750 euros a few years ago



Bradistilova,  
Olga

1908-1981

master of  
classic genres -  
portrait,  
landscape, still  
life.

She was born on October 3, 1908 in Stara Zagora. Graduated in painting from [the Academy of Arts](#) in Sofia (1929), then specialized in Rome (1934-1936).

In 1936 Olga returned to Bulgaria, makes exhibitions, After September 9 1944 works as a free artist often does portraits on demand. two exhibitions in Italy (Milan and Rome). Exposure in Rome received a gold medal in 1969. In 1972 she was awarded Academician of the International Academy Tiborina in Rome - the same title carried by Salvador Dali and Joan Miro.

Bratistilova Olga was also awarded the Golden Legion contribution to the art of Italy

Bunardjiev, Petar	1921-1995	Landscape	nice colourist teacher at Sofia Art School 500 euros
Chokanov, Denjo	1901-1982	landscape	Born Veliko Tarnovo. Graduated 1926 from Sofia Art School - from class of Prof Gyundiev.  A great colourist and favourite of mine 700 euros 40x50
Cholakov Zivko	1914-1978	portraits landscapes	born in the village of Beloslav, Varna, in 1914, and died 1978 in Sofia. In 1939 he graduated in painting Prof.Nikola Ganushev at the National Art Academy in Sofia. In the period 1946-1978 Zivko Tcholakov taught drawing at the Architectural Institute. Founder of the Department Drawing and Modeling together with Boris Kolev, and later became the dean of the department. Specializes in Czechoslovakia, Italy and France. Prof. Zivko Tcholakov creativity devoted exclusively to the art of the portrait. Controlled picturesque craftsmanship are the main characteristics of his works.

### Chorbadzhtiyski-Chudomir, DMITAR

1890-1967  
Caricatures

Born Turia, Kazanlak  
1906 State Drawing School  
1920 Kazanlak teacher  
1930 Director of Kaz Gallery

"Chudomir" is the alias of one of the most popular Bulgarian writers and artists - Dimitar Chorbadzhiyski. His many friends and acquaintances called him simply "Miracle" not only to express closeness, but to highlight his extraordinary originality.

Choudomir was a truly unique phenomenon in the history of Bulgarian culture - combining extremely rare gifts as both a writer and artist. No one has yet dared to argue which one is stronger. His brilliant (2500) sketches, drawings, caricatures, portraits, compositions magnificent humorous stories and feuilletons (he issued five collections and reprinted more than 60 times) keep Bulgarians laughing still



He was also a prominent museum and cultural figure, researcher, lecturer in painting, journalist, editor ...

He had close personal and creative contacts with celebrities such as Nikolai Raynov, Elin Pelin, Geo Milev, Shtarkelov Constantine and has a worldwide reputation (his short stories have been translated into twenty languages), but despite all this, never left home for long in his home town and the Valley of Roses, remaining throughout his life close to the people of this region, which are the source of his inspiration.

While satire is a scalpel, humor is a salve for the wounds Choudomir has a dominant artistic ambition - by means of humor to heal human ills and social vices. Inexhaustible humanism moves his pen and brush, when seeking support on the Bulgarian and the universal character of his characters - earth, vital and wise as nature itself. Choudomirova's creative world has long since become a way to penetrate the Bulgarian mentality. His representative art exhibition "Fellow



<p>Countrymen" in recent years visited several European capitals and was hailed as magnificent spiritual ambassador of Bulgaria. Almost all the creative heritage of Choudomir stored in Literature and Art Museum "Chudomir".</p> <p><a href="http://www.chudomir.eu/">http://www.chudomir.eu/</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.sitebulgarizaedno.com/index.php?option=com_content&amp;view=article&amp;id=498:2013-01-09-17-03-56&amp;catid=29:2010-04-24-09-14-13&amp;Itemid=61">http://www.sitebulgarizaedno.com/index.php?option=com_content&amp;view=article&amp;id=498:2013-01-09-17-03-56&amp;catid=29:2010-04-24-09-14-13&amp;Itemid=61</a></p>			
Chorbadzhtiy ski, Maria	1895-1974		Grad 1921 - when settled in Kazanluk From 1936 teacher there
<p><b>Christov Ivan</b></p> <p>1900-1987 Landscapes</p> <p>Born Vidin</p> <p>In 1925, graduated in painting at the National Art Academy, Sofia under Profs.Nikola Ganushev and Nikola Marinov. Specialised at the Art Academy in Munich. After his return, he began working as a teacher in Tryavna.</p> <p>From 1943 he was a freelance artist. He spent every summer in Veliko Turnovo to paint picturesque landscapes, inspired by the architecture of the old city. His works of this period are characterized by deep colour, handled with verve impulsive. Preferred is a blue-green range</p> <p>The painter created panoramic landscapes from Tarnovo, Plovdiv, Melnik and Sozopol.</p> <p>600 euros</p>			
Dabova, Zladka	1927-1997	mainly woodcut and lithography	<p>Born Malo Konare, Pazardzhik.</p> <p>In 1953 graduated graphics at the Art Academy in the class of prof. Ilyia Beshkov. In her works the themes of folklore, Renaissance architecture, lifestyle, childhood and motherhood are the most common. From 1953 she participated in exhibitions around the world- Sao Paulo, Lugano, Rome, Moscow, Warsaw, Tokyo and many other cities around the world.</p> <p>Illustrated many books, a graphic folk tales, stories for children.</p> <p>Wife of the artist Hristo Neykov.</p> <p>For example see section 3.2</p>
<p><b>Dankov, Boris</b></p> <p>1906-1997 portraits, landscapes, still life</p> <p>born Kazachevo village, Lovech</p> <p>1920 - his family moved in Lovech. In 1931 he entered the Art Academy in Sofia . Graduated " Painting "with Prof. Nikola Marinov,</p> <p>1933 - 1946 he was an art teacher in Lovech, 1946 - 1949 - a teacher of drawing in Sofia ; 1949 -1950 - Chief Inspector of drawing in the Ministry of Education, 1951 - 1970 - professor, associate professor, professor of "painting" at the Art Academy in Sofia,</p> <p>1960 - 1964 and 1966 -1970 on - Vice Rector of the Academy of Arts</p>			







good landscapes for reasonable prices

Dachev, Petar	1896-1968	landscape	Born Kotel  1,600 euros 40x50
Dechev, Danail	1891-1962	landscape,	Born Razgrad. Self-taught painter. Graduated from the industrial textile school of Sliven. 1932 visited France and Italy. From 1919 to 1939 lives in Plovdiv, and after 1939, in Sofia, but rarely stays in one place. Opens his first individual exhibition in Sofia in 1933. January 1, 1962. struck down by paralysis.  work sold in april 2012 auction for 1,250 euros

Denev, Boris

1889 (??)-1969

Landscape

Born Veliko Tarnovo; In 1903-1908 he was teacher in drawing in Tarnovo.

His first solo exhibition as amateur artist held in Sofia in 1909.

From 1909 to 1913 he studied in Munich.

As official war artist from 1914 to 1935 he created battle oil paintings, many sketches and drawings depicting soldiers' everyday life.

His preferences were in the fields of landscape and portrait.

He was inspired by the beauty of Melnik, Samokov, Plovdiv and Sofia region.

Stripped of his membership of the Union of Bulgarian Artists for a decade until being readmitted in 1956.

During this period, he was forbidden from painting in the open air- and had to resort to painting the back yard of his house!

1,500 euros





Deneva, Slavka	1929-1984	Figurative, still life etc	daughter of Boris Denev, a highly original artist who „never favoured splendid nature but consciously sought the banal" (Angelov p 29). Her paintings vibrate with colour and life.  They rarely come on the market.
Djambazov, Ivan	??	Landscape	Spent time in Razgrad  interesting - and reasonably priced
Dmitrov Nikola	1894-1989	landscape	Born 1894 in the village Pudarasko, Plovdiv. Graduated Arts Sofia in 1921. Member of the Association of South Bulgarian artists  <a href="#">Underrated artist</a> whose work goes for very reasonable prices

### Dimitrov, Vladimir (The Master)

1882-1960;  
Romantic folk

born Frolosh (Kyustendil) and started his career as a clerk. In 1903 he enrolled in the School of Drawing in Sofia where he had been called the Master (Maistora) for the first time. Visited St Petersburg, Moscow and, in 1910, Italy. Then to Svishtov where, from 1911-18 he taught gymnastics and calligraphy. During this period he was a war artist. 1918 returned to teach at Kyustendil 1922-23 worked in Italy. In 1922 he met the American John Crane in Rome and sold him much of his work for the next few years.

He is considered one of the most talented 20th century Bulgarian painters and probably the most remarkable stylist in Bulgarian painting in the [post-Russo-Turkish War](#) era

His portraits and compositions have expressive colour, idealistic quality of the image and high symbolic strength. Many consider his artwork a fauvist type

More than 700 oil paintings of him are in the [Vladimir Dimitrov Art Gallery](#) of Kyustendil. See this [short study](#)



### Dobrev, Dobre Sr

1898-1973  
Landscape



born Sliven graduated 1925 from Prague Fine Arts Academy. 1926-1938 he lived and worked in Republic of Czech.

Afterwards he came back to Bulgaria and to 1954 he lived in Sliven and afterwards in Sofia.

From 1954-1965 he taught at Sofia Art School.

He created paintings revealing the life in villages.

He painted landscapes, daily scenes, figurative compositions.

His preferred topic are the markets in his native town of Sliven. His paintings don't often appear on the market. They will cost a minimum of 700 euros

Dobrimov, Alexander	1898-1958	Great cartoonist	<p>Born Veliko Tarnovo. In the period 1915 - 1919 he studied at the Arts school (Sofia). Specializing in Vienna, the famous "School of Applied Arts" (1921-1924).</p> <p>From 1921 worked in the field of caricature and portrait images create psychological depth. Prints cartoons in newspapers, magazines, collections "Temida", "Hornet" in programs for theatrical performances and some humorous magazines abroad.</p> <p>Works in Vienna (1921-1921), Prague (1927 - 1932), Rome (1932 - 1933), Warsaw (1937), creating cartoon portraits of prominent public and cultural figures. In the 50s cooperated with the newspaper "Literary Front," "National Culture", "Worker's Act", "Evening News" and others. Not easy to find his work on the market.</p> <p><a href="http://www.artprice.bg/art_targ_list.php?autor_id=211">http://www.artprice.bg/art_targ_list.php?autor_id=211</a></p>
Dobrogea Todor	1904-90		
Dobrujdanski, Todor	1904-1990	Landscape	900 euros (for 52x72)
Doganov, Liuben	1884-1975	Landscape	Student of Atanas Mihov
Donev, Bocho	1904-1969	Figurative	<p>Born Oreshak Lovech district. 1929 - 1944 was a high school teacher in town.</p> <p>He painted landscapes and genre painting with a social purpose. . He worked in the field of applied arts. Studied painting at the <a href="#">National Academy of Arts</a> under Prof. Dimitar Gyudzhenov.</p> <p>1935 - 1936 at Warsaw School of Fine arts ability. Also studyied graphic. Drew inspiration from museums in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Yugoslavia.</p> <p>500 euros (for 45x64)</p>
Draganov, Dimitar	1908-1996	graphics	<p>born Izvorovo village, Targovishte</p> <p>Prof Todorov taught him at the Sofia School of art from which he graduated in 1932 after which he returned to teach at his village school.</p> <p>Concentrated in his graphic work on miners</p> <p>There is apparently a gallery in his village with his works</p>
Eftimov, Vasil	1900-1987		<p>Vassil Evtimov was born on June 29, 1900 in the town of Kyustendil. Graduated from Art Academy in 1925, majoring in painting. Initially, under the influence of his close friend Vladimir Dimitrov Vassil Evtimov turned to portraits and genre painting. Upon completion of the academy, he was a teacher in Pazardzhik. Later, he worked three years in the State Printing House - Sofia, as an artist, where he created 23 projects for stamps with historical themes. Vassil Evtimov twice visited Paris, where he had a solo exhibition.</p> <p>After World War II, worked at the National Art Gallery and the Ethnographic Museum. In 1955-1956, the artist visited China for six months and made exhibitions in Beijing, Shanghai and other cities. He was among the founders of the Bulgarian-Chinese Friendship Society. He created his own theory of spectral colours in different ranges like</p>

			musical tones - major and minor. His monotypes are rich in shapes, colors and invoices. Participated in numerous exhibitions in Kyustendil - 1979 Munich - 1985. The largest collection of his works in the Art Gallery "Vladimir Dimitrov - the Master" - Kyustendil. Vassil Evtimov painted a series of portraits of famous personages Sofia families, still lives, landscapes and figurative compositions.
Enchev-Vidyu, Ivan	1882-1936	theatre	Born Kazanlak 1901-03 National Drawing School 1906 Munich Back to Bulgaria 1908

### Frantzaliiski, Pavel

1884-1956  
Aquarelle

Born Samokov, he graduated in 1907 in the class painting of Ivan Mrkvicka.

After two years of teaching in Sofia and Stara Zagora came back to his hometown and taught drawing at the school from 1909 to 1931 - taking an active part in the public life of the city.

His name is associated with the establishment of the art collection at the Museum of History in Samokov. He was also an active hiker and mountaineer.

He painted mostly with watercolour mountain landscapes, with Rila as the main theme.

The topics of rural life moved him. Had over 30 solo exhibitions in Sofia, Dupnitsa, Plovdiv, Stara Zagora, Zagreb, Ljubljana.

[Loran Gallery had a nice exhibition](#) recently celebrating 130 years since his birth



### Ganchev, Rusi

1895-1965



Landscape

A favourite of mine.....Ganchev was born in Ruse. Graduated from the Academy of Art in 1924. He then returned to his hometown and was a founding member of the House of Arts and the Art Gallery.


He worked as a teacher at that time in Rousse and villages. In the late 40s he moved to Sofia and worked until 1960 as an artist at the Ethnographic Museum.

Ruse gallery has only three of his paintings, and national - none - but not difficult to pick up his work.

In paintings dominate river scenes with landscapes of the Danube coast, landscapes and still lifes.


300 euros

Gancheva, Nevena	1897-1984		Born Ruse.
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<b>Gasharov, Ruhmen</b>	1936-	naïve, pop art	<p>"His major topic is man and his daily routine. Pieces of embroidery and lace, fluttering angels and showy shooting galleries, leaflets and newspaper pieces all combine to give rise to the Bulgarian type of pop-art. The markedly naïve manner the artist employs has developed into a subtle artistic style. The lyricism his personages invoke, contrary to the expectations, stem from the banal, the kitsch and all that is very close to the manner of the daily routine.</p> <p>The freshness in Gasharov's canvases comes from the artist's subtle understanding of man, his feeling for the human soul and his ability to recreate in a concise manner the specific moments of the mass culture that have revealed most vividly throughout the years man and man's daily life. The artist's credo: „I love simple beauty and ordinary things“, goes hand in hand with the graceful culture of artistic expression".</p> <p><a href="http://www.gashar.dir.bg/">http://www.gashar.dir.bg/</a></p>
<p><b>Genev, Slavi</b></p> <p>1893-1977 Landscape</p> <p>studied at Sofia School of Art until 1923 - with a spell 1917/18 at Munich Art Academy. And 1926/27 at a paris art school.</p> <p>Worked as an art teacher. Made Samokov his base in 1930 ; taught art there from 1931-1948; and became the Director of the Historical museum from 1949-1958 works costs about 400 euros - and another favourite of mine</p>			
			
<b>Georgiev, Boris</b>	1888-1962	graphic artist	<p>born Varna after which his parents moved to Odessa where he had his schooling.</p> <p>Studied art in St Petersburg 1905-09. He continued his art studies in Munich from 1910. 1911-1913 he travelled by foot throughout Europe - from Norway to Spain - studying drawing in Florence for a few months. Two years he lived in an alpine house he built himself near Trentino. Italy was his base - although he also travelled to India making friends with Mahatmi Gandhi and Nehru.</p> <p>He does not seem to have returned to BG before his death in Rome.</p>
<b>Georgiev, Gospodin</b>	1909-1978	Landscape, portrait	<p>born Stara Zagora. Graduated Sofia 1931 and 1932 studied at Academy of Art Rome.</p> <p>Teacher in Stara Zagora.</p> <p>Awarded Cyril and Methodius medal 1971</p>
<b>Georgiev, Pencho</b>	1900-1940	secessionist - theatre design with strong interest in graphics, woodcuts etc	<p>born Vratsa. Set designer Sofia.</p> <p>26-29 worked in Russe's municipal theatre.</p> <p>1929-34 Paris where he specializes in applied arts in the workshop of Paul Laurent. Social issues dominate in his work</p> <p>He tends to turn ordinary rural people in monumental characters.</p> <p>Used chalky colors. Exhibited 11 international exhibitions</p>
<b>Geshev, Jordan</b>	1907-1973	Aquarelle landscapes	<p>born in Chichil in the Vidin region.</p> <p>In 1930. graduated from the Sofia Art School - receiving a special decoration by prof.Haralampi Tachev.</p> <p>Member of the "Modern Art" association. Organized 22 solo exhibitions. Participated in joint and collective exhibitions. A</p>

			significant part of his works occupies landscapes of Rila, Pirin, Stara Planina. Exceptional aquarelle master
Getsov, Ivan	1910-1991	creates portraits, landscapes, figure compositions. Independence wars	Born in Liaskovets. In 1938 graduated from the Painting in <a href="#">the Art Academy</a> under Prof. Dechko Uzunov. Participate in the DAE. His paintings at <a href="#">the National Gallery</a> and other galleries in the country. Visited many countries in Europe. Central Committee of the Dimitrov Young Communist League
Gloginkov, Simeon	1919-97	Landscapes, portraits	Born Burgas. Graduated Sofia art school 1943 under Boris Mitov
Goev, Vladimir	1925-2013	various genres of painting	born in Burgas, in a family of immigrants from the village <a href="#">Mokreni</a> . From 1939 to 1944 he studied at the Real School in Burgas, where his class teacher is the big Burgas artist and sculptor <a href="#">Petko Zadgorski</a> . Member of <a href="#">the Union of Bulgarian artists</a> and for more than 20 years a member of the Management Board.
Goyeva, Elsa		Sombre abstracts of buildings	
Gyudzhenov, Dimitar	1899-1979	Historical themes	In 1915 he graduated in painting in the class of Prof. Zeno Todorov Industrial School of Arts (now the National Art Academy) in Sofia, meanwhile studied two semesters at the Paris National School of Fine Arts (1913-14). He started painting as a war artist in the headquarters of the Eighth Infantry Division Tundzha - see his paintings preserved in the Museum of Military History. His aim is to portray them the essence of military events inseparable from the lives of ordinary soldiers. Between 1920 and 1933 Dimitar Gyudzhenov taught at the Academy, where he was professor. Among his students there are Stoyan Venev and Titirinov. In 1925 painted his first paintings of historical subjects, which occupies the main genre in all its work. Other genres in which Gyudzhenov works are domestic painting, landscape and portrait. From 1933 to 1945, he worked as a painter at the headquarters of the Bulgarian army, which inspired a whole series of paintings of military and historical themes and personalities. After 1944, the social issues are also well represented in his paintings. In 1959 Dimitar Gyudzhenov and Professor Nicholas Kozuharov were entrusted with the restoration of Stara Zagora church "St. Dimitar". In 1961 they painted the Varna Orthodox Church "St. Nicholas". Gyudzhenov also painted murals of churches in Burgas, Plovdiv. Participated in exhibitions of these companies in Bulgaria and abroad (Berlin, Vienna, New York, Prague).
Gyurova, Bronka	1910-1995	landscape	born Shumen; in Belgium 1937/38 for a special course in illustration. First solo exhibition 1943. Married artist Eliezer Alesheh in 1947. Emigrated with him to South America in 1952



Hadjimladenov, Naum	1894-1985	Humorous Figurative	<p>Born Samokov In 1921 he graduated from the National Art Academy, Sofia under Prof. Ivan Mrkvicka. The same year, organized his first solo exhibition in Samokov. He began to work as a teacher in his hometown.</p> <p>From 1934 to 1946 works and lives in Sofia - accepted as a member of the Unit of Bulgarian Artists, works at various newspapers, illustrates literary series "Ancient Bulgaria".</p> <p>During this period Hadjimladenov participates in a number of General Art Exhibitions in the capital and other cities, in the presentations of Bulgarian art abroad - 'Roerich Museum' (New York, 1935), Athens (1938). Participates in the International Biennial of Humour and Satire in Gabovo city. In 1937 Hadjimladenov was awarded a gold medal at the Paris presentation for his work 'Market in Samokov. "</p> <p>1,500 euros for 30x30</p> <p><a href="#">ArtpriceBG has a good data base</a> of his work</p>
Ivanov, Boris	1904-1993	portraits	born Sofia and graduated from Sofia Art School in 1927, Exhibited internationally; taught applied graphics and painting at Sofia Art School 1946-51. In the 1960s he wrote numerous articles about artistic life in Bulgaria.
Ivanov, Ivan	1879-1966	landscape, portrait	
Ivanov, Lyubo	1891-1974	Urban landscape	
Ivanov, Sabi	1896-1976	Landscape	<p>1918-21 studies at Art Academy, Sofia</p> <p>My "end of the village" and ?? boat at Soz?</p>
Ivanov, Sergei	1881-1967	Portraits, landscapes	<p>studied at Sofia's Drawing School 1898-1905; then 2 years at Munich's Art Academy. Most of his works were destroyed during the 2nd WW Sofia bombings</p> <p>700 euros for 50x33</p>
Ivanov, Stefan	1875-1951	portraits landscapes	graduated Sofia Art School 1903 - following Miroslav Markvitchka's class. Teacher at the School from 1907 - full Professor from 1914
Ivanov, Vasil	1909-1975		See <a href="#">Loran gallery site</a>
<b>Karamihailova Elena</b>  <p>1875-1965 Portrait</p> <p>born in Shoumen, she graduated from Robert College Constantinople in 1895. Then a graduate of the Art Academy in Munich, Germany</p> <p>She was the first Bulgarian lady-artist.</p> <p>The portraits of women she painted are strong psychological studies.</p>			

Kabakchiev, Hristo	1879-1970	aquarelle and architectural landscape. Depictions of ancient Tarnovo.	He originated from a family of strong Bulgarian national revival and revolutionary traditions. In 1899 he was one of the first graduates of the School of Arts. He was then a teacher in Veliko Tarnovo, Koprivshitz. Painter of the museum of ethnography in Sofia. A great part of his works were destroyed during the bombings in 1944.
Kantemirov, Petar	1885-1967	town landscapes	Born Sopor. 1907-09 Munich Art Academy with visits to St Petersburg. In 1912 he was one of the team painting the new Alexander Nevski Cathedral. 1932-1950 Russian and drawing teacher at Karlovo
Karakashev, Georgi	1899-1970	Theatre; landscape	Born Russe. studied art at the Bucharest Academy of Art between 1919 and 1920. In 1931 graduated from the Art academy, majoring in painting in the class of professor Tzeno Todorov. Creative career began in the 20s in the area of picturesque-decorative direction of Bulgarian art direction and in 1930-they deal mainly with applied art (layout, advertisements, labels, posters). As a painter, he excels in the field of landscape and portrait - his preferred techniques being pastel and oil paints. In 1931-32 he taught drawing in male high school in Sofia and, from 1934 and 1945, taught internal architecture and style in Rousse. Worked as art director in Rousse dramatic theatre (1945-48), Youth Theatre in Sofia (1948-52) and the National Theatre "Ivan Vazov" (from 1952 year).
Karasimeonev, Tudor	1889-1937	Caracatures - of intellectuals of Kaz and Burgas	Born Kazanlak 1906-1917 State Art School 1918-22 Gabrovo 1922 Burgas
Karshovski, Preslav	1905-2003	Landscape	

### Kavarnaliev, Hristo

1892-1951  
Aquarellist  
Particularly seascapes

Graduated Sofia Art School 1915. He studied under Prof. Ivan Markvichka, Anton Mitov, Ivan Angelov and Jaroslav Vesin

Travelled across Russia, Italy, France, etc.  
Victoria Gallery has a [good archive of his paintings](#)

900 euros 70x100



Kazakov, Dmitar (Neron)	1933-1992	folk	<p>born in Village in Veliko Tarnovo. Graduated in graphic arts from the Art Academy in Sofia under Prof. Evtim Tomov in 1965. He created paintings, prints and wood carvings, depicting uniquely folk motives in his works. Since 1966 he participated in art exhibitions in Bulgaria and abroad. s. During his lifetime Kazakov made big donations to the towns of Lovech and Tryavna, which have permanent exhibitions of his works.</p> <p>Works don't often appear - and will cost upwards of 5,000 euros</p>
Kiureliev Jordan	1877-1910	landscape	<p>born Sliven superb painter whose life was cut tragically short when he drowned in the Black Sea</p>
Klisurov, Petso	1865-1933	Portraits, genre, still life	<p>Born Kazanlak 1884-88 Florence Academy of Arts For next decade, a high school teacher of arts at Kazanlak, Sliven, Varna, Plovdiv and Sofia 1911-1920 National School of Drawing</p>
Kodjamanov, Tihomir	1892-1975	landscapes, portraits	<p>Born Gabrovo, schooled Vidin. In 1913 graduated at the Art Industrial School, Sofia, with Professor Ivan Mrkvicka. Specializes in Vienna from 1923 to 1925 He worked primarily with landscapes - his preferred subjects are the coast of Danube. Author and portraits. Long worked as a teacher in Vidin.</p>
Koichev, Ganyo	1887-1951		<p>Born Kazanlak 1910-1914 Sofia Art school From 1918 Harmanli</p>
Kolev, Boris	1906-1986		<p>born Kyustendil. Graduated 1932 from Sofia Art Academy. Also art historian and critic</p>
Kolev, Kolyo	1905-1950	Landscape Graphic	<p>Born Kazanlak Thick complex technique; Rhodope mountains focus</p> <p>Committed suicide 400 euros;</p>

## Konsulova-Vazova Elizabeth



1881-1965

Portraits

born in Plovdiv. In 1902 graduated the second alumni of the Arts school, in the class of Jaroslav Vesin.

Between 1909 and 1910, she specialized in portraiture in Munich Academy.



Her first exhibition in 1919 in Sofia is the first solo exhibition of female artist in Bulgaria.

Exhibitions then followed in Prague (1931), Plzen and Bratislava (1932) and again in Sofia in 1934 and 1956.


She prefers techniques such as pastel, oil and watercolor. She leaves many paintings of flowers and is also the first Bulgarian female artist painting the nude body

Konsulova Vazova is one of the founders of the association "Native Art". Develops social activities as an editor of "Lecture" magazine (1934-40) and the "Home and World" magazine (1940-43); cooperates with the magazines "Artist" and "Art" with art critical articles on Bulgarian and western fine arts.

Kosev, Dmitar	1904-1980	Landscape, genre	Born Dryanovo 1929 graduated 1936 teacher Kazanlak
Kostova-Vladeva Radka	1907-2002	landscapes	Born Shipka 1931 graduated Teacher 1932 Burgas Donated work to Shipka
Kozuharev, Nikola	1892-1971	portraits	born Kazanlak but raised in Stara Zagora where his father was a teacher and founder of the Regional Museum.  Studied under Tseno Todorov in Sofia and in Paris 1914/15. Was war artist. In 1920s and 1930s specialised in national historical scenes. Worked for the king  From 1929-63 he was Professor at Academy of Arts. 1963/67 he was head of Dept at Higher Institute of Education VT  <a href="#">ArtBG has a few examples</a> of his work
Krastev, Mihai	1877-1956	graphics	Born Pirot - studies Drawing School Sofia 1899-1902. Taught at Karlovo HS - then from 1910 lived in Plovdiv for a decade - then from 1920 at the High School for Girls Sofia. Retired in 1931 and devoted himself to graphic studies of literary and artistic figures - and sketches of Bulgarian streets and buildings.
Krastev, Kiril Vasilev	1904-1947	Graphic artist	born in Yambol. Eventually he graduated in 1930 natural sciences. In 1938-39 specializes Art in Paris. Literary critic, essayist, scientific popularizer, art. Kiri Krastev is a great figure in Bulgarian Art. Issued monographs on Papazov, Sirak Wanderer, bencho Obreshkov. Doing research on the frescoes in the Boyana Church, the Zemen monastery. Wrote works on Michelangelo's "Understanding Painting", 1947 Soia City Gallery has a nice bilingual monograph on him

<p><b>Kriskarets-Yonchev, Xristo</b>  1879-1950  Aquarelles Mountains  Born and lived Samokov.</p> <p>Graduated in 1912 from Sofia Art School where his teachers were Prof. Ivan Angelov and Professor Ivan Mrkvicka.</p> <p>Working mainly in the landscape field he uses watercolour, tempera and oil he organizes many exhibitions in Sofia and Samokov. His famous works are the series "Landscapes from Rila" (1936).</p> <p>In 1931 took part in the founding of the Historical Museum in Samokov city and subsequently worked as a museum curator.</p> <p>500 euros</p>				
Kutev, Hristo	1869-1943	Portraits, landscape	<p>Born Shipka; graduated VT (teacher a Czech)  Settled Krakow  Tatra scenes  In 1950 his wife donated 50 of his paintings to Bulgaria</p>	
Kutzkarov, Dimitar	1835-1963	aquarelle	<p>born Stara Zagora and graduated 1908 from State Academy where he studied under Mrkvicka.</p> <p>Then teacher in SZ; 1918-1927  teacher in Yambol, Pleven, Svishtosh and SZ.</p> <p>In 1927 appointed to Berkovitz where he settled permanently and where more than 1000 of his works are housed at the Art Gallery</p>	
<p><b>Lavrenov, Tsanko</b>  1896-1978  vivid and mystical portrayal of monasteries and cities  Born Plovdiv  No formal education</p>				
Lazarov, Ivan	1889-1952	sculptor	<p>Born Karlovo. 1917/18 Munich Art Academy.</p> <p>Mid 1920s travelled in Europe.  1924 became Professor at the Sofia Art School - 1950-52, the first Director of the Art Academy</p> <p>One of the most sensitive sculptors - of peasants, soldiers etc</p>	



Lazarov, Miladin	1894-1985	portraits, landscapes	graduated 1916 from Sofia Art School
<b>Lukova, Vera</b>  1907-1974 Modernist portraitist  born plovdiv.  Graduated 1930 from the Art School sofia			
Makedonski, Dimitr	1914-1993	Figures, landscapes	1944 graduated from Sofia Art School 1945-65 Curator of Sofia City gallery
Mandov Radomir	1883-1947.		born on January 8, v1883 , Kazanlak. Graduated (1906) painting in art school , Sofia studied under Professor Ivan Angelov and Prof. Ivan Mrkvicka . Member of the Society "Modern Art ." gentle landscapes and compositions .
Mandov, Dechko	1886-1969	Portrait, genre, landscape	Born Karnovat. Childhood Shipka 1912 graduated Sofia
Manski, V	1905-1969	Urban landscapes	Born Vidin He graduated from the Academy of Arts in Sofia in 1938, major art of painting, the class of Dechko Uzunov. He created a number of urban and industrial landscapes. He worked in various formats and employed all techniques: oil paints, water-colour, Indian ink. He painted a lot of compositions devoted to daily life and building. Manski is one of the masters of colouring in the Bulgarian landscape. From 1941 he participated in general art exhibitions, the exhibitions of the Bulgarian artists, exhibitions abroad, and organized 4 individual exhibitions in Sofia /1946, 1953, 1964, 1965
Marinov, Ilyia			
Marinov, Nikola	1879-1948	aquarelles	
Marinov Vasil	1897-1943	landscape, genre	born Stara Zagora, Graduated Sofia's Drawing School in 1907 where he studies under Vesin and Mrkvichka. Delightful colourist War artist.

Markov, Marko	1889-	sculptor	
Mateyev, Kyril	1920-2006	Alpine	graduated 1945 in mural painting from Uzonov's class. A prolific painter  300 euros
<b>Mechkuevska, Alexandra</b>  1907-1993 Seascape  born Burgas. Graduated in 1933 in painting from the Academy of Fine Arts in Sofia under prof. Nicola Kozhuharov and prof. Haralambi Tachev and additional graphics under prof. Vasil Zahariev. She was a member of Union of Bulgarian Artists since 1945..  From 1934 participated in group exhibitions and exhibitions of women artists, in Paris - Exhibition/1937/, Belgrad/1938/, Cairo/1938/, Alexandria/1939/; individual exhibitions in Burgas /1934, 1936, 1948/, Sofia/1935, 1937, 1945, 1947/, Plovdiv/1936/, Kazanlak/1937/. She was awarded a medal at the Paris Exhibition /1937  Another of my favourite artists <a href="http://www.artprice.bg/art_targ_list.php?autor_id=428">http://www.artprice.bg/art_targ_list.php?autor_id=428</a>  This one is 1,500 euros			
Mihailov Boris	1868-1921		Born Kazanluk Graduated Plovdiv ? (under Mrz) 1887-92 Florence Academy of Art 1892- art teacher in Sliven and Sofia 1901 <a href="http://www.gallery-victoria.com/viewentity.asp?Entity=40">http://www.gallery-victoria.com/viewentity.asp?Entity=40</a>
Mihailov Nikola	1876-1960		Born in Shumen. Nikola Mihaylov devotes a large part of his painting to women. Female characters are complemented by the interior and clothes painted by master sweeping drapes and folds He painted portraits of our cultural personalities and one of the founders of a realistic portrait painting in Bulgaria.  He began studying painting in Sofia srt academy with Professor <a href="#">Ivan Mrkvicka</a> . In 1895 went to study in private art schools in Athens and Munich. Opens School of painting in Munich (1900). Teacher in Sofia (1902) and became a painter of the Ministry of Education. In 1897 participated in the Second Art Exhibition. Specializing in Paris and London, where he continued to learn, making copies in museums. In 1911 returned to Germany and lived as a freelance artist in Berlin and Hamburg. Travelled almost all his life, staying briefly in a country. Painted portraits in Argentina, Chile, Brazil, Italy, England, Austria.



## Mihov, Atanas

1879-1975

Landscapes



Born Stara Zagora. Graduated 1904 from Drawing School. Sofia where he studied under vesin and Mrkvichka. One of initiators of Bulgarian impressionist painting.

1906-09 teacher in Silistra; 1910-12 Razgrad; 1918-23 Russe. War artist during Balkan War and First WW. Settled in Sofia 1923 where he worked in Knyazhevo until 1932

misty horizons, and peculiar tender veils covering the landscapes,

The gradual escape from subject painting, with which Atanas Mihov begins, in favour of the pure landscape, is noticed in 1908 when at the International Fair in Munich he receives a golden medal and honorary diploma for best painter, where he participates with his two emblematic paintings The Ices of the Danube and By Silistra, kept in the National Gallery of Art at the moment.

At the fair in Munich he becomes a member of the International Union for Fine Arts and Literature. This recognition which he does not make public at all, gives him the confidence to devote his life entirely to art, so steadily that after almost twenty years of teaching in the country, he devoted himself solely to painting in his house in Knyazhevo and to participating in exhibits. Thus was among the participants in exhibitions in Munich, Liège, Venice, Prague, Belgrade, Zagreb, Ljubljana, Rome and many others. His works can be found in all of the big galleries in our country and abroad, especially in Switzerland and Italy.

1,000 euros 50x40

Mikrenski, Constantin	1921-1999	Aquarelles	
Milanov, Ivan	1928-		Graduated 1950 from Sofia Art Academy under Ilyia Petrov 1962 seascape in Rakurski gallery off book market
Milchev, Nikolai			a prolific Socialist Realist painter a book about whom I came across in the quaint little second hand bookshop at 87 Vasil Levski St. Interesting stuff - but I can't find him even on Bulgarian google!
Milenkov, Alexander	1882-1971		Born Samokov  1906 painted murals an stage work in Munich. First professional stage artist
Milev, Ivan	1897-1927		Born Kazanluk. Regarded as the founder of the Bulgarian Secession and a representative of Bulgarian modernism, combining symbolism, Art Nouveau and expressionism in his work. In 1917-1918, he fought as a soldier in WW1. In 1920, he was admitted to Sofia Art School, He also contributed to the communist comic magazine Red Laughter as an illustrator and cartoonist In the summer of 1923, he visited Turkey, Greece and Italy with a group of fellow students.. In 1926, he graduated in set decoration from the National Academy and worked as a stage designer. Afterwards he became an independent freelance painter and illustrator and he also painted frescoes. Generally living in poverty, Milev had a brief 18-month marriage to opera singer Katya Naumova; their daughter Mariya Mileva eventually

			<p>became an architect. Regarded as one of the great masters of distemper and watercolour painting in Bulgarian art, Milev often created socially-loaded works. His characteristic decorative style was much influenced by the European Secession, but it was also related to Bulgarian folk art and icon painting.</p> <p><a href="http://www.ivan-milev.com/bulgarian-modernism.htm">http://www.ivan-milev.com/bulgarian-modernism.htm</a></p>
Minkov, Laliu	1911-1985	Urban landscape	600 euros 75x63
Mirchev, Nikola Stoilov	1921- 1973	portraiture and cartoonist .	<p>Born in the town of Kyustendil in 1921 Joined NAA in 1940, but due to lack of funds interrupted his studies. He graduated from the Academy of Arts in 1948 in the class of Prof. Ilia Petrov in painting pursuing socialist realist work. He was a member of the UBA from 1948 and Secretary of the UBA in the periods from 1953 to 1955 and from 1963 to 1965 and Chairman of UBA from 1970 to 1973 during his tenure as Chairman of UBA built exhibition complex "Shipka " № 6 in Sofia in 1970 in 1971 he was elected to the Central Committee of the Communist Party .</p> <p>Nikola Mirchev is one of the founders of the " Hornet ." Published drawings and newspaper " Fatherland Front " and " Workers work." He paints portraits of Todor Zhivkov , Lenin Dzerzhinski , people from his family and a famous one called "Interrogation" (1954). Created posters and cartoons on foreign policy issues. Illustrated many books , including " Bulgarian Folk Tales" by Ran Basil and "Tobacco" by Dimitar Dimov .</p> <p>Nikola Mirchev was twice winner of the Dimitrov Prize . In 1970 he was awarded the title " People's Artist" . Nikola Mirchev is the father of artist Ivaylo Mirchev , chairman of the UBA 2004 Nikola Mirchev died in 1973 in Paris, where he was receiving treatment .</p>

### Mitov, Anton

1862-1930  
genre, war, portrait, landscape

Born Stara Zagora.  
Graduated Florence 1885.  
Worked as teacher in Stara Zagora, Varna, Plovdiv and Sofia.  
1896-1927 Prof of History of art and Perspectives, Art Academy Sofia(its Director 1912-18 and 1924-27).  
Author of first book on history of art written in Bulgarian. Co-founder of Society in Support of Bulgarian Art in 1893.  
Among his most famous works are : " Return of the vintage " , " Market Grape Evksinograd near Varna " , " Goldsmith the Sofia market " , "From the Sofia market " , " Group of farmers market in Sofia " , " group of peasants market in Silistra " , "" Portrait of Ivan Mrkvicka , "" Self-Portrait " .  
Author of the first seascape in Bulgarian painting : "Varna port " , " Varna beach " , "Varna Sea."  
Actively participate in the socio- cultural and political life and manifests as passionate publicist .



Constantly traveling around the country to export reports and interviews because he believed that art should become closer to ordinary people. While writing art criticism, painting murals in churches and monasteries , as well as illustrations for novels such as " Under the Yoke" and barely has time to rest. Long before his death in 1930, he was recognized not only as one of our greatest

artists, but also one of the greatest patriots . Managed to cultivate the spirit of art and his son Boris (1891-1963) , who also became a famous artist, lecturer and professor at the Art Academy .

<http://alneg008.blogspot.com/2013/02/1862-1930.html>

Mitov, Boris	1891-1963	portraits	<p>Born Varna – son of the famous Bulgarian artist Anton Mitov , his mother Olga Hramtsova is Russian. Born in Varna, where his father at that time was a teacher. In 1894 , when he was three years old , the family moved to Sofia. Boris began to paint as a child and participated in exhibitions from age of fifteen . He studied with Professor Ivan Angelov in Industrial School of Arts - Sofia. In 1911 graduated from the general course and went to Paris , where he remained until 1914 , working with Professor Fernand Kormon and attended the Academy of Fine Arts. Completed the artistic education under Ivan Mrkvicka in 1915.</p> <p>During World War I was a military artist ( 1915-1918 ) . Lecturer (1924-1929) and professor (1929-1959) in drawing and painting at the Art Academy in Sofia.</p> <p>Works in portrait and nude. One of the prominent Bulgarian portrait , created portraits of his father, Anton Mitov , Ivan Shishmanov Dobri Hristov , Sava Ognianov , Elin Pelin, Georgi Dimitrov and many other famous Bulgarians</p>
Mitov, Georgi	1875-1900		<p>Born Stara Zagora - Brother of the painter Anton Mitov . . Died only 24 years old and therefore leaves little heritage - landscapes, portraits, nudes and academic study. These show the hand of the great artist, plastic craftsmanship and sophisticated sense of colour.</p> <p>Graduated (1898) painting at the Art Academy in Turin gold medal with Prof. Giacomo Grosso. He returned home and until his death he taught drawing in Gabrovo, Plovdiv (1898-1900)</p>
Monev, Marko	1939-2004	Landscapes; buildings	born in village in Pleven and moved in 1959 to Russe

### Morozov, Peter

1880-1951

Romantic landscape



Born Russe

1905-1915 specialised in graphic art in Paris

Graduated in painting under professors Ivan Markvicka, Yaroslav Veshin and Ivan Angelov from the Art Academy in Sofia in 1905.

From 1905 to 1915 he specialized in graphic arts at the Academy of Fine Arts in Paris, at the Art Academy in Sofia and under Joseph Peter.

The artist participated in the Balkan War and the World War I.

He began his artistic career as painter but gradually devoted himself to printing and he contributed significantly to its development in Bulgaria and to colour aquatint in particular.

He created hundreds of works depicting ancient Bulgarian monasteries, churches, houses and bridges,



**Moutafov, Alexander**

1879-1957

Seascape

born in Shumen and educated in Varna, he studied art in Turin between 1899 and 1902; then Munich 1902/03.

He was also a war artist

It was the Munich experience which aroused his interest in Jugendstil.

From 1921-33, he was professor of Painting in Sofia's Art Academy.

First Bulgarian seascape painter, he laid the basis for this specialism for subsequent Bulgarian painters.

There is, I understand, a museum in his Sozopol house

**Mrkvichka Ivan**

1856-1938

Military scenes; rural life

born Czechia and studied art in Prague.

Came to Plovdiv in 1881 and moved to Sofia in 1889.

1896 co-founder of Academy of art. Prof of Painting there until 1921.

Became member of Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in 1918 and edited book in 1929 on Bulgarian painting but returned to Prague about 1937.

**Naidenov, Grigor**

1885-1983

Café scenes

aquarelle

One of my real favourites...

[http://artprice.bg/art\\_targ\\_list.php?autor\\_id=180](http://artprice.bg/art_targ_list.php?autor_id=180)

<http://auction-victoria.com/viewentity.asp?Entity=229>



Naumov, Vladimir	1897-?	Rural scenes	
Nedkova, Vera	1908-1996		Skopje 1924-30 vienna
Nenov, Ivan	1902-1997	portraits, landscape	born Sofia but family moved in 1914 to Kyustendil where he met Vladimir Dmitrov-Maistora. On returning to Sofia in late teens he was influenced and helped by Ivan Lazarov and was accepted in 1919 as an extra-curricular student in scupting at the Art School - becoming a

			full-time student in painting in 1920. Worked and lived extensively in Italy from 1932 Founded the studio for mosaics in the Art School. Preferred tempera
Nikolov, Damyian	1898-1958	Genre; portraits	Born near Burgas; graduated 1929 from Sofia Art Academy under Stefan Ivanov 1933-35 Paris spent time in Prague
Obreshkov Bencho	1899-1970	Fig, still life, landscapes	Born Karnovat. Studied under <a href="#">Oskar Kokoshka</a> in <a href="#">Academy of Fine Arts</a> in <a href="#">Dresden</a> in 1926 and sculpture under <a href="#">Antoine Bourdelle</a> , Paris in 1925 - 1927. He was a member of the "Native Arts" Union (1925), a member of the Union of the New Artists (1931)
Panayotov, Panayot			
Parov, Stefan	1905-1971	Landscape, genre, portrait	Born Kazanlak Graduated 1931 - then teacher Kaz Settled Sofia early 1950s

### Pascin, Jules

1885-1930  
graphic artist



born Vidin to a rich family (grain trader, family moved to Russe when he was young and he completed his (secondary) education in Brasov (Romania).  
His early talent drew the attention of the famous caricaturist Alexander Bozhinov but he never attended art school.

Some of his drawings appeared in the renowned German satirical journal *Simplicissimus* when he was only 21. After unsuccessful attempts to involve him in the family business, he moved to Paris in 1905 where - with various forays to the USA and Caribbean, he remained until his suicide.

<http://www.shepherdgallery.com/pdf/pascin.pdf>

From It's About Time <http://bjws.blogspot.ro/2012/10/a-wife-lover-painted-by-european.html>

Born as Julius Mordecai Pincas of Italian-Serbian & Spanish-Jewish parents, he attended secondary school in Vienna, returning in 1901 to Bucharest, where his family had settled, working briefly in the office of his father's grain-merchandizing business.

He was, however, becoming passionately interested in drawing, for which he showed precocious talent. At the age of 16, he became the lover of a woman who ran a

brothel & was allowed to draw the residents. In 1903, he moved to Munich, where he attended the art school run by Moritz Heymann.

After Pascin moved to Paris in 1905, he became a central figure in the social & cultural life of the cafes & studios of Montparnasse. At the outbreak of World War I, he lived in the United States from 1914 to 1920, sitting out World War I. He taught at the Telfair Academy in Savannah, Georgia, associated with the Telfair Art Museum. He & Hermine painted in New York City as well as in Miami, New Orleans, & Cuba.


Pascin married Hermine David at City Hall in New York City. The witnesses were fellow artists Max Weber (???) & Maurice Sterne. Pascin became a citizen of the United States.

Returning to Paris in 1920, he continued to compose paintings of delicately toned, thinly painted, but poetically bitter & ironic

studies of women - including his wife, his mistress, & some prostitute acquaintances.

Although Pascin's watercolors, oils, and drawings were generally well received, a series of unfavorable reviews in 1930 left him severely depressed. Suffering from depression & alcoholism, he committed suicide on the eve of a prestigious solo show by slitting his wrists & hanging himself in his studio in Montmartre. On the wall of that studio, he left a message written in his blood saying good-bye to his love, Cecile "Lucy" Vidil Krohg. In his will, Pascin left his estate equally to his mistress, Lucy Krohg, & to his wife, Hermine David.

<http://www.lonbersyl.com/pascin%20a.html>

Pavlovich, Nikolai	1835-1895		<p>born in Svishtov. Son of the famous Renaissance figure Hristaki Pavlovich , one of the great educationists of the early Renaissance , was able to raise and an excellent way his son. He managed to earn money and ultimately collect the necessary sum to follow illustrations in Vienna. He continued his education in Munich , where he graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts.</p> <p>Love for Bulgaria but determines the future of the artist. Rather than remain in Germany , where he would enjoy a peaceful and secure life , Nicholas Pavlovich decided to return home , saying :</p> <p>"I wanted to give to his people as my powers permit, something of my profession - he wrote in a letter of 1860 - will look to picturize glorious deeds of our kings "</p> <p>Thus Pavlovich became the first master of the historical genre in Bulgaria. Later he stated that through his paintings not only wanted to evoke admiration but also to influence the people to make them love you even more Bulgaria. Started helping by her talent and the national liberation movement - moved to Belgrade, where he met George GS Rakovski and illustrates his book</p> <p>After the liberation Nikolai Pavlovich refused to take part in the management of the state. Instead became a teacher and taught some of the future artists of Bulgaria . joining as a volunteer in the Serbo-Bulgarian War. He died on February 13, 1894 .</p>
<p><b>Penkov, Ivan</b></p> <p>1897-1957 born Kazanluk - moved to Burgas in 1915 when his father dies.</p> <p>Studied at art school in Sofia 1919-1922. After a joint exhibition with Uzunov (with Milev a childhood friend), both travelled to Munich where he stayed a year and was influenced by Jugendstil and by German architecture.</p> <p>On his return to Bulgaria in 1923, he worked with theatre decorations. From 1939-1955 he was Professor of Theatre decoration at Sofia Art Academy.</p>			
Peretz, David	1906-82	portrait, still-life, landscape	<p>born Plovdiv. From 1936 travelled in Europe. Spent a year during the war in a concentration camp</p>

Pessov, Hristo	1923-2000	sculptor	born Kazanluk
Petkov, Naiden	1918-1989		
Petrov, Boyan	1902-1971	portraits and figure composition	born Sofia. Grduated from Sofia Art School 1928. Early 1930s worked in France and Italy. 1934-1948 worked in various schools in Bulgaria and became teacher at Sofia Art School from 1948
Petrov, Costa	??	old village scenes	lived in Razgrad area

### Petrov, Ilia

1903-1975

Graphics Populated landscapes



born Razgrad; Sofia Art Academy 1921-26 - latterly under Prof. Nikola Marinov. Won the competition in 1926 and went on to specialize in Munich. 1928 to attend the private school of Heinrich Mann and learn from the masters of the world of painting (Art Academy). Gave an exhibition there in 1928. On his way back to BG did an extended tour of German cities, France, Austria and Italy to become acquainted with European traditions. 1941-1967 he was Professor at Sofia Art Academy. 1961 visited India Art teacher (1928 - 1940) Dean of the Faculty of Fine Arts ( 1957-1962 ) and Rector (1965- 1968), the Academy , and in 1972 became academician. / Encyclopedia of BAS

After the seizure of power on September 9 1944 by the communists he took an active part in the management of UBA and was its Secretary-General

(1949-1951 and 1957-1959 ). Makes mural frieze ' to 1944 ' in the lobby of the theater Sofia "Dimitar Blagoev" (1946 , the frieze "From the struggles of the party in the region of Gabrovo " Party House in Gabrovo (1963) . participate in the work of " Monument to the Soviet Army " in Sofia. Began to work the works of historical revolutionary themes : " Guerrillas in action " (1974 , National Gallery ) , " Before shooting " (1954 , National Gallery ) , " Partisan Song" (1959 , National Gallery ) , " The Messenger " (1963 , National Gallery ) and dr.Ot that time compositions "Fishermen " (1948 , National Gallery ) , " Fishing women" (1948) and , but his true virtuosity seen in naked bodies , where he remains one of our greatest artists.

Left a tremendous amount paintings - portrait sketches, animals , some of which still have not been displayed in public. They impress his acute observation and expressive language.

Makes several attempts at sculpture

### Petrov, Ivan

1909-1991

Fig and landscape

Born on 17th September 1909 in village Razpopovci.

He graduated from the Academy of Arts in Sofia in 1931 and became Professor at the Academy of Arts in Sofia





## Petrov, Nikola

1881-1916  
landscapes  
born Vidin.

A defining figure in the country's painting tradition – despite his short life. Only 22 when he helped found the Modern Art Association in 1903 aiming to change the course of Bulgarian art.

Can be considered founder of urban landscape in the country

In 1908 began his studies in the second class of the National Academy of Arts, where he studied painting classes with Ivan Mrkvicka, Jaroslav Veshin and Ivan Angelov. After interruptions graduated in 1913 Nikola Petrov painted mostly landscapes. It is close to the art of the French Impressionists (Manet, Monet, Renoir).

Part of his work is a genre paintings in which the artist combines modern technology with Bulgarian subjects. In 1912 participated in the murals in the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral with the composition "Introduction to the temple" in the northern altar.



Popov, George John	1906-1960	Figurative	<p>In Paris 1930 - 1935 and 1937 -1939 which acquainted him with French art and the representatives of surrealism, futurism and cubism. 1947 - 1948 the artist lived and worked in Sweden where he created mainly illustrations. That period is also noted for his water-colours which stand out for their extraordinary intensity.</p> <p>He found the constraints of the new regime oppressive and, from the late 40s worked entirely in pastel and in cinema. He explored the topic of "Fishermen" in a cycle of preparatory sketches and pictures. At that time he was attracted by the still-life genre.</p>
Popova-Balarewa, Vaska	1902-1979	Figurative	<p>born in the city of Ruse on April 7, 1902. She was raised in the family of a general and a mother who was an artist and a musician. Her love of art took her to the National Academy of Arts, Sofia, where she took up studies in Prof. Tseno Todorov's painting class. Under the mentorship of Prof. Nikola Marinov, she mastered the language of colours, graduating in 1927. Two years later she was admitted to the Academy of Arts in Rome for further specialization. There she got acquainted in detail with leather crafting techniques. After her return to Bulgaria, she established herself as a pioneer in this field. In 1933 she married General Hristo Balarev, with whom she had a son. The artist's home was frequented by intellectuals Soya Paprikova, Bistra Vinarova, Alexander Poplilov, Cyril Petrov, Raphael Mihaylov, Andrey Nikolov, Boris Ivanov, Alexander Zhendov, Mara Georgieva, Vaska Emanuilova, Veselin Staykov, Lyuba Palikareva.</p> <p>There is an interesting group of paintings standing out, representing the images of tenor Stefan Makedonski, composer Lyubomir Pipkov, artists Cyril Petrov and Raphael Mihaylov, author Elisaveta Bagryana, all of whom were friends with the artist. applied arts (leather crafting).</p>
Poptoshev, Todor	1879-1956	aquarelles	



Rachev, Alex	1927-2007	historical	<p>Born Pleven. Painting completed in <a href="#">VIII "Nikolay Pavlovich" / NAA /</a> in Prof. Ilia Petrov and Sculpture (1964) in G.Kotsev.</p> <p>The Art of Alex Rachev moving in two parallel directions - historical and landscape painting. While his landscapes are light, modern and artistically managed, isdtoricheskite his paintings oscillate between baroque and romantic to impress with surprising compositional solutions and dynamic accents. He is an author whose works are yet to be rediscovered by art historians and critics. The world in his paintings is intriguing and unexpected result of intellectual harmony between reality and fantasy author.</p> <p>More famous works of Alex works Rachev: "Battle of Vladislav of Varna" (1965), "The Fight in the Batak Church" (1969), "assimilate the Rhodope Bulgarians" (1971), "Export flag" (1982) and others.  <a href="http://www.artprice.bg/art_targ_list.php?autor_id=60">http://www.artprice.bg/art_targ_list.php?autor_id=60</a></p>
Radikov, Dmitar	1879-1940	Genre, landscape, portrait	<p>Born Samokov. Taught by Mchkrk</p> <p>From 1901 teacher at Kazanlak</p> <p>1907 teacher Samokov</p> <p>1918 teacher Russe - with A Mihov and Lazorov</p> <p>Part of group painting icons of Russe and Samokov</p>
Rashev, Sasho	1927-2012		
Radoikov, Dmitar	1878-1940	landscape, portrait, military	graduated 1901 from Sofia Art School - from Professor Markvichka's class

## Rainov, Nikola

1889-1954  
Secessionist



born in. [Kesarevo](#) , Veliko Tarnovo, into a family of prominent activist for national liberation [Ivan Raynov](#) . Brother of the painter [Stoyan Manolov](#) , professor of ceramics and father of the eminent sculptor [Bojan Raynov](#) and writer [Bogomil Raynov](#)

Graduated from [seminary](#) in [Sofia](#) ( [1908](#) ). Follows [a philosophy](#) in [the University of Sofia](#) ( [1911](#) ). Participates in [the First World War](#) as a war correspondent to 9th Pleven Division occupied area of the defense line of the Southern Front, known as Dojransko.

Graduated from [State Art-Industrial School](#) in Sofia ( [1919](#) ). Writes [poetry](#) , [fiction](#) , cultural anthropological works on the history of [art](#) , [folklore](#) , [ethnography](#) ; cooperate with the press; examine many [cultural monuments](#) ; published a number of articles on [art](#) and [literature](#) .

Editor of the magazines " [Zenica](#) "and" [Orpheus](#) "newspapers" Belltower "and" [ankhing](#) ". His first book " [Bogomil Legends](#) " ( [1912](#) ) was published by the pseudonym Anonim .Several months later, [Anton Strashimirov](#) published a large

review of the book in two successive books of the magazine "Our life" (v. 9-10), calling the author "creative talent to look you've never experienced," and his debut - " event. " [\[2\]](#)

In the period 1918-1919,cooperates with [Geo Milev](#) , writing several articles for his magazine "Balance". The same year issued several books: "Visions around ancient Bulgaria", "Book of Kings", "The eyes of Arabia", "Solar Tales", "Between the desert and the life", the poem "The City." Translated "Thus Spoke Zarathustra" of [Friedrich Nietzsche](#) .

In 1919 embarks on a great journey in Egypt, Syria, Palestine, Asia Minor.

During the period 1922-1927, he worked as chief librarian at [the National Library](#) in Plovdiv. Seconded for two years in Paris to meet with cultural monuments in the French capital. When he returned, accepted a teaching position at the Art Academy in Sofia, where he was professor of art history from 1927 to 1950.

Rainov Stoyan	1894-1978	Aquarelle	
Rilski, Vladimir	1905-1969	portraits, landscapes	<p>born in Peshtera in a family of renowned intellectual George Rilski. He joined the Art Academy in Sofia in 1925, where his teachers were Prof. Dimitar Gyudjenov, Prof. Nikola Marinov and Stefan Ivanov.</p> <p>In 1929 he moved to Vienna for specialization. After his return to Bulgaria, Vladimir Rilski began working as a high school art teacher in Plovdiv. Associate to the circle of "Baratsi" - the artists Vasil Barakov, Zlatyu Boyadjiev Tsanko Lavrenov whose motto is deeply in the spirit of the national art.</p> <p>His first solo exhibition was in Plovdiv city in 1938. He also organized a joint exhibition with Zlatyu Boyadjiev.</p> <p>From 1945, taught at the Art Academy in Sofia. During this period he participated in many General Art Exhibitions. In 1949 Rilski money pressures forced him to do fairly menial work in Smolyan - doing posters, wall paintings and painting the interiors of public buildings .</p> <p>Indicative of the personality of Vladimir Rilski is the attitude of his contemporaries to him - because of his idealistic spirit and selflessness is called by Rhodopeans "Bezsbarnika" and 'Forest King'.</p> <p>His painting brings the romantic iconography of the church and the realism of the Bulgarian folklore. While he was alive, the artist was considered as one of the most prominent representatives of the movement of native art in the 30s and 40s of XX century. Of the same, period (30s of XX century) is his emblematic cycle "Houses of Koprivshtitsa town". Picturesque views of the Rhodope Mountain Rilski shows at his self-exhibition in Sofia in 1964. He died in 1969 in a tragic accident in "Shiroka luka" village.</p>
Roussev, Svetlin	1933-	modernist	<p>Grand Old Man and Doyen of Bulgarian art - and leading art critic.</p> <p>Born in Pleven.</p> <p>In 1959 he graduated in painting at the State Art Academy in Prof.. Dechko Uzunov.</p> <p>Since 1975 is a professor at the Art Academy.</p> <p>Chairman (1973-85) of the Union of Bulgarian Artists, Vice-President (1982-84) of the Committee for Culture, Director (1985-88) of the National Art Gallery</p> <p>Amassed a fantastic collection which he has donated to two public galleries, one in Pleven, the other in Sofia at what used to be his studio very near the Alexander Nevsky Church.</p> <p>The latter contains a huge library of art books which is freely available for consultations...</p>
Rubev, George Hristo	1894-1975		<p>trained in Prague after 1919</p> <p>600 euros</p>

Sachariev, Vasil	1885-1971	Aquarelles; graphics	painted Samokov area
Sakazov, Milen		Marine- scapes	
Savova- Nenova Ekaterina	1901-1980	portrait, still- life	born Sofia. Graduated 1925 from Prof Marinov's class One of founders of group of women artists in 1928

### Shahanova-Shishkova, Olga

1895-1978

landscape, interiors, still life

Born in Plovdiv. Graduated from the Art Academy in Sofia in the class in painting under Professor Ivan Mrkvicka in 1920. Until 1925 assistant teacher in painting at the School in Sofia.

From 1930 s lived and painted in Estonia, Latvia, Finland and Germany where she had exhibitions. Wife of the famous industrialist and producer of wines Shishkov. in 1946 she (strangely) returned to Bulgaria.

Shahanova Olga was a member of the Association of South Bulgarian artists and the company of women artists and president. In the 60s Shahanova Olga went to Athens. For some time she lived and painted there.

Most famous are the interiors. These people are recreated in a particularly intimate, ordinary atmosphere. Filled with vibrant color.

900 euros 44x49



Shivachev, Marko	1892-1946	Portraiture; aquarelles	born Kazanlak graduated 1922 plus teacher in Elena, Chipra, Kadzhali
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### Shtarkelov, Konstantin

1889-1961



Landscape, aquarelle

Born Sofia.

He studied at the Art Academy in Sofia from 1906. In 1909 departed for Moscow. His first solo exhibition held in 1911. He was war artist in 1912-1913 and 1917.

He was the most famous and outstanding Bulgarian watercolour painter who preferred to draw landscapes from Rila and Pirin Mountains, Sofia and Tarnovo regions. His works were presented at national and solo exhibitions in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Venice, Germany and Hungary.

After September 9, 1944 his work was denied and forgotten because of his ties with the Palace. They call it the "official artist of the bourgeois regime and royal favorite" ... Constantine Shtarkelov was deported, expelled from UBA and spent five months in the Central Prison.

His father George was a citizen of Sofia, a shoemaker by trade, and his mother, Mary (d. 1925) was born in Nis. The father of the artist died early - Constantine was only 13 years old. Began to assist his mother to feed the family - works shoemakers, selling newspapers, extra in Opera and the National Theatre in the evening ...

In 1906 Kontantin Shtarkelov joined the school of drawing and even the first semester participated in the competition among the students of all courses autumn landscape, winning second prize. Just a few months later received the first prize for the winter landscape. This is a surprise for professors and students and creates a well-deserved popularity of previously unknown young man. However, Konstantin Shtarkelov remains among the most modest, silent and diligent students of drawing school.

Because of the financial status of the family, he was forced at the end of the second year of drawing leave school. barely eighteen, he arrived in Russia and stay for a while in Odessa. No money, no acquaintances and recommendations, he found shelter in the first place in the famous Odessa monastery "Andreevskoe clergy" - a refuge for many Bulgarian migrant workers, students and craftsmen fallen. The monastery provided the residents have only shelter, tea and bread.

"I was pleased when I had a piece of bread and a cup of hot tea. "Only a few months Constantine finds its environment - also wandering and homeless, but filled with bright hopes and foremost with unquenchable love for art.

Little is known about either the days of the young artist. Lalyu Metev gives us valuable fragments of the time, writing: "Worried by the obligation to return to the dormitory of the monastery at the specified time, Shtarkelov rather rent a bed in a *crowded room in the city where he lives during their stay in Odessa Here lies before him passes a gallery of images and judgments - acquaintances with vagrants pursued by misfortune and unhappiness people, idealists or spiritually corrupt, scammers unrecognized poets, artists, young and enthusiastic theatergoers, clean and noble souls and schemers petty crooks. The huge world of pre-revolutionary Russia in their daily lives, with southern temperament, with all of its sounds, colors and contrasts that undoubtedly left irresistible impression on the young artist.*

Every day Shtarkelov out by the sea, to the Bolshoi fountain or single remote districts of the city to draw. Found a permanent buyer Georgian-known bookseller, whom he undertakes to sell everything you draw. In Odessa is natural and its initial meeting with paintings of Russia, because he sees the originals here in arranging exhibitions of the "Company of the south Russian artists" and "Peace iskusstva."

Again, we can refer to the writings of Lalyu Metev: "*In the second year the young Bulgarians went to Moscow, and again rent beds for rent in a shared room with six workers. Old Russian capital, its rich spiritual life, exhibitions, workshops of the famous Moscow School of Painting made extraordinary and lasting impression on the stunned new and unusual experiences Bulgarian. In Moscow Shtarkelov acquainted more close and true characteristics of the Russian soul, not only as a manifestation of individuals, but also as an expression of ethnical psychology. For a fascinating insight helped his close friendship with a young Russian writer, late offshoot of dying populism and incorrigible idealist - David Maksimchuk. Thanks to him Shtarkelov could not only penetrate the cultural and spiritual life of Moscow to meet with the various events of the then artistic world, but go touch the charm of the Russian soul. The strongest experience Shtarkelov in Moscow was meeting in the Tretyakov Gallery with great masters of Russian painting - Ventzeslavov, Shishkin, Pollen, Savrasov and foremost Levitan and Kuindzhi. Days he roamed the quiet halls of the Tretyakov Gallery, pausing in front of paintings by Repin, Serov, Vrubel and Vasnetsov from ...*"



At the end of 1909 Shtarkelov Constantine returned to Bulgaria with enough experience to work alone but hesitates. He wants to have an artist diploma and thereby assume more secure future because such a document entitling him to be a candidate as a teacher.

In 1910, due to material difficulties the student decides to submit to the gallery Trapkov four unsigned watercolors, which were immediately purchased.

But the young artist understands that he needs contact with nature, the living beauty of Bulgaria, summer meadow, rain and storms, including born scent and fresh beauty of all nature. Therefore, in the summer he goes to Pavlikem, Sevlievo, Gabrovo, Tarnovo, and paint all the way. This is where Constantine Shtarkelov met for the first time with those adorable spots foothills of Bulgarian nature - the blossoming summer lawns briars scrubs with sunspots shadows near the deserted road, which will remain favorite stories of all his future work. Searches are aligned with a spiritual urge of the artists we find the face of Bulgarian, attract the world's attention on the natural beauty of our Revival architectural tradition and nature.



This tour became the occasion for the next 1911 Shtarkelov to organize his first solo exhibition - nearly 80 works, many of which were purchased at the outset of the exhibition.

This success makes name Shtarkelov popular among the general public. He suddenly found himself the owner of an incredible amount of money for it, Shtarkelov leaves a significant portion of her mother, and the rest goes to the West to visit major galleries in Vienna, Munich, Paris, London, Lausanne, Geneva and Venice.

After 75 days Shtarkelov Constantine returned to Bulgaria with rich impressions of the centuries-old treasures of European art with new 35 painted during the trip with pictures and more greater hope to recreate and inspires in his works Bulgarian nature. During the Balkan War (1912-1913) and the subsequent Second Balkan War (June to July 1913) Shtarkelov a martial artist and leaves a number of drawings, sketches and drawings of the life of the soldiers.

Above is [a 1912 study from](#) the campaign

In 1917, once again war artist during the First World War lasted from July 28, 1914 to November 11, 1918, leaving more than 300 sketches and drawings.

In 1915 he graduated in painting at the State Art-Industrial School in Prof. Ivan Mrkvicka. Ranks in the list of legitimate and regular members of the Union of Bulgarian scientists, writers and artists. In 1919, he was among the founders of the "Native Art" and participated in all its exhibitions. Upon completion of the First World War artist devoted almost entirely to watercolor landscapes. Acquired a mature and reliable technique in watercolor, it shows previously unknown in our achievements in this most difficult and most delicate painting. The lack of established predecessors worked extremely watercolor landscape reveals a rich field to the artist to use all the features of the technique to achieve true and powerful transformation of our country's nature and his own state of mind.

He remains, however, the incomparable singer of the mighty mountain ranges - Rila and Pirin, raw beauty and pristine nature. Variety of rich colors and landscapes are his from the Rhodopes, painted in the thirties. These are not the Rhodope Mountains Barakov or Zdravko Alexandrov of Detchev or Tcanko Lavrenov - the world of human emotions, daily care and joy. Rhodope's paintings are Shtarkelov song about nature, the timeless beauty of nature that is born and lives by the light of the sun. fascinating beauty of native nature artist presents in their field and mountain flowers - sometimes a single squill, wild hollyhock or geranium leaf, filled not only with virtuoso mastery of drawing but with sincere emotion and love: *"When I paint - either landscape or flower, I hear music or if you read poems of Lermontov or Nadson. And when I hear a great orchestra or choir I see landscape ... These landscapes, as are the days of my sad songs, these little cosmic, of which the soul is spiral Sharing is its mood. There her real life"* - confesses the artist Konstantin Shtarkelov.

He exhibited in solo exhibitions in Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Venice, Germany, Hungary, he participated in collective performances of Bulgarian artists.

After September 9, 1944 Konstantin Shtarkelov is deported, expelled from UBA and spent five months in the Central Prison. His property was confiscated, and his apartment was destroyed in the bombing - there were destroyed

[http://artprice.bg/autor\\_details.php?act=data&elem\\_id=451](http://artprice.bg/autor_details.php?act=data&elem_id=451)

Shtiliavona Tsvetana	1903-94	Still life and portraits	Born Kazanlak - 1917-22 Sofia art school under Todorov 1925-28 under Guvdzhinov studied Paris, Prague and Vienna 1929-33
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## Skitnik, Sirak

1883-1943

modernist

Born Sliven.

Draughtsman, stage designer, writer, critic, editor and publisher.

He studied (1908-12) under Léon Bakst at the Academy of Arts (Akademiya Khudozhestv) in St Petersburg and became a follower of the aesthetic concept of WORLD OF ART, dominated by the innovative decorative designs of Vera Komissarzhevskaya and Tairov.

After he returned to Bulgaria, Skitnik was engaged in a variety of projects, writing poetry, critical reviews of exhibitions and plays and monographs on other artists such as Bencho Obreshkov.

He also designed sets for the National Theatre (Naroden Teatâr) in Sofia. He painted mainly landscape and still-lives in oils (e.g. Interior with Flowers, 1920), tempera (e.g. Russian Monastery, 1912), gouache (e.g. the Kiss of Judas, 1920;) and watercolour; he also drew in coloured pencil.



During the 1920s and 1930s he became known in Bulgaria as an innovator who experimented with new mixes of colour and form. Both his poetry and his original and highly emotional painting show his allegiance to the Symbolist movement. From 1920 to 1940 he was editor and publisher of the intellectual magazine Zlatorog (Golden Horn).

He also belonged to the National Art Society of Bulgaria and was one of the founders (1932) of the Union of the Societies of Artists of Bulgaria

Slavov, Peter	1908-1988		
Sotirov, Stoyan	1903-1984	portrait, landscape	born in Gradevo village, Blagoevgrad region. Graduated in painting under Prof. D. Gudzhenov and Prof. St. Ivanov from the Academy of Fine Arts - Sofia in 1928
Staikov, Anastas	1905-1988	interiors, landscapes	born Smolyan first solo exhibition there at age 20  graduated 1929 from National Art Academy 1928-31 Paris 1932-48 painting teacher in various Plovdiv schools celebration of traditional Rhodopes living - frequent use of tempera. Bright colours

## Staikov, Vesalie

1906-1970

Graphics



born Peshtera, a small town nestled in the picturesque northern slopes of the Rhodope Mountains. On his mother's side he is descended from a prominent family of fighters for church and political independence. These militant traditions tended to develop certain tendencies in the artist's work. He worked on a whole cycle of engravings based on the national liberation struggle of the Bulgarian people from the epoch of National Renaissance down to our times.

Vesselin Staikov spent his childhood at the house of his grandfather, one of the enlightened and educated men of his times. Here, at an early age, he had an opportunity of browsing in the old family library, acquainting himself with books and illustrations not easily accessible in that epoch. These opened up a new world to him. He would sit for hours studying the pictures of the world-famous masters of Renaissance and of eminent Russian Painters.

The illustrations of the Russian Niva magazine and Gustave Dore's fine engravings in the Bulgarian translation of Dante's Inferno had a particularly strong and lasting impact on the impressionable child. The second major influence in the youth's life was the Bulgarian painter and pedagogue Vitko Babakov, who used to spend summer vacations in Peshtera. Young Staikov would go out together with him and paint the attractive environs of the town and the scenic beauties of the Rhodope Mountains. During these excursions the two would engage in long discussions on the problems of art.

In 1925 Vesselin Staikov left for Sofia. As soon as he saw Staikov's exceptional gifts, the eminent Bulgarian Painter, Professor Stefan Ivanov, permitted the youth to join his last-year class before he was even admitted to the Academy of Art. Once he took one of Staikov's etudes and showed it to his class, citing it as an example of rare talent in a schoolboy.

In 1926 Staikov enrolled at the Academy of Art in Prof. Nikola Marinov's class as a non-matriculant, for he had not yet completed his secondary education. Later he took all the necessary examinations, became a regular student and in 1932 graduated from the academy, where he had attended Prof. Tseno Todorov's course in painting.

In the summer of 1932 Vesselin Staikov left for Arbanassi, a Bulgarian village famous for its original old architecture.. 1933 Staikov joined the State Printing House in Sofia as engraver. Here he lived amid engravers and technicians and acquainted himself with printing technique. Staikov remained about a year at the State Printing House. He increasingly establishing himself as a creative artist with a social consciousness, as a bold master of composition, as a portrayer of Bulgarian architecture and of Bulgarian land.

Parallel with his successful participation in the Bulgarian National Art Exhibitions, Vesselin Staikov achieved considerable renown abroad. At the 1937 World Fair in Paris Staikov scored his greatest success, winning a gold medal. In 1938 the artist left for Munich, where he organized an individual exhibition, The same year he participated in a Bulgarian exhibition shown in New York. In 1940, after a competitive examination, Staikov went to Italy for further specialization. In Florence he studied painting with Prof. Felice Carena, and in the course of his tour of Italy he painted landscapes with architectural subjects from Florence and Venice.

In 1945, Staikov was appointed assistant professor in graphic arts at the Sofia Academy of Art. He also turned his attention to postage stamps.

In 1951 Staikov left his chair at the Academy of Art to devote himself completely to creative work. In addition to engravings with themes from nature, old towns and mountain villages, Staikov produced a cycle of engravings on the modern city: Sofia with its modern architecture, the clearing of rubble after the air-raids and the construction of new houses and buildings. He shows a particular liking for the architectural landscape with its contrasting plasticity.

The artist is also fond of doing ancient, strangely shaped trees.

<http://www.galleryloran.com/authors/veselin-stajkov-veselin-staikov/paintings>

## Stamatov, Stanio

1886-1963

Figurative

Another favourite of mine...

born Kazanluk.

Graduated in painting under Prof. Ivan Mrkviska in 1911, Academy of Fine Arts - Sofia.

He specialized in painting in Germany 1925 -1927 and in France in 1926. He taught painting at Kazanlak.

Participated in the Balkan and First World War as a war artist.



Stamatov organized over 40 exhibitions in Bulgaria. He worked mainly in the figure compositions and landscapes. Has left many domestic scenes from his familiar rural life, large-format chamber and scenic landscapes from different corner of Bulgaria.

Died in Munich

1,400 euros 44x64

Stamenov, Alexander	1905-1971		Born Koukoush, Macedonia 1921-26 Art School under N Marinov
Stanchev, Christo	1870-1950		Svezhen, Karlovo
Stanchev, Niagul	1900-1964		

## Stefchev, Boris

1894-1983

Seascapes



Graduated in painting in 1916, Art-Industrial School in class of Prof. Tseno Todorov, and then a student of decorative art with Professor Stephan Badgov.

In 1918 Ministry of Education granted scholarship for his studies in Munich. But due to the outbreak of the First World War, he specialized in the Royal Academy of Art in Vienna 1918-22. In the first year he is under Professor Pohvalski and the next two continued their studies in class of Prof. Jungvirt.

His first solo exhibition is in Sofia in 1921. Stefchev began working as a teacher of drawing in Sofia.

His early compositions are defined as part of the symbolism of Bulgarian art in the first quarter of the twentieth century.

Since 1927 he devotes most of his work of the sea view.

Suggestion of mysticism create specific character of most of the landscapes of Boris Stefchev.



Another of my personal favourites. More on [the Victoria Gallery site](#)

500 euros			
<b>Stoilov, Vasil</b>	1904-1990	all genres of art of painting – portraits, daily scenes, landscapes	<p>Born 1904 in the village of Podene (at present a Sofia quarter) in a large family.</p> <p>In 1922 he began his studies at the Academy of Arts, in the art of painting class of Prof. Tzeno Todorov.</p> <p>From 1929 to 1932 he studied and worked in Paris as he earned his living, selling his pictures.</p> <p>From 1958 he was professor of drawing. At Faculty of Arch He produced a gallery of deep emotional images of rural villagers.</p> <p>He preferred the technique of water colours and themes of daily life.</p> <p><a href="http://www.galleryloran.com/authors/vasil-stoilov-vasil-stoilov/paintings">http://www.galleryloran.com/authors/vasil-stoilov-vasil-stoilov/paintings</a></p>
<b>Svetkova, Kostadinka</b>	1929-2006	Still lives	Classy Matisse-like colouring
<p><b>Tabakov, Ivan</b></p> <p>1901-1977 Versatile Born Sofia. In 1925 he graduated in painting under professor Nicola Ganushev at the Art Academy - Sofia.</p> <p>1926-32 he was at the Art Academy Paris with professor A. Bernard and prof. M. Bashe. Participated with portraits in the Salon of French artists and "Independent Artists". Worked on portrait, landscape and figure compositions.</p> <p>The first two decades of his work creates an intimate, mostly psychological portraits and a series of images of eminent figures of culture.</p> <p>He painted a series of landscapes of Ohrid, Kavala and others.</p> <p>Another favourite – and another underrated 80x70 3,400 euros</p>			
<b>Tachev Haralambi</b>		Like Milev - nouveaux arts	
<p><b>Tanev Nikola</b></p> <p>1890-1962 Landscape</p> <div data-bbox="191 1451 745 1856" data-label="Image"> </div> <p>One of Bulgaria's greats! Fantastic colourist...</p> <p>Born Svishtov, the family moved to Sofia in 1896. At age 13 sent to Paris with brother to study print techniques but began to reveal his artistic talents.</p> <p>Studied under Paul Renoir and, in 1910, under Claude Monet.</p> <p>Returned to Bulgaria in 1912 – with first one-man show in Sofia. From autumn to May 1912 back in Paris for painting. The catalogue to his 2<sup>nd</sup> exhibition in Sofia in 1913 was written by the famous caricaturist Alexander Bozhinov</p> <p>War artist from 1916-18.</p> <p>1919 exhibition in Sofia had 168 works and another catalogue by Bozhinov. He was a prolific painter – sometimes averaging 4 a day!</p>			



<p>1920-22 Lived and painted in Austria and Germany.  1927 started to paint in Karlovo village – site of his most famous paintings.  Travelled extensively in Europe 1928-39.  Was imprisoned for several months after the Communist takeover – for little reason.  1949 suffered a stroke which left him paralysed</p> <p><a href="#">ARTPRICEbg has a good archive</a> of Tanev work</p>			
Titirinov, Strahil	1905-?	aquarelles	Colourist
Todorov Pavel	1894-1989??		
Todorov, Tseno	1877-1953	Landscape, portrait	1896-1901 State Drawing School 1901-07 Paris
Toma, Evtim	1919-1997	Aquarelle, graphics	<p>Born in the village Treklyano , Kyustendil . He studied graphics under Prof. V. Zachariev and painting under Prof. Nikola Marinov. In 1943 graduated from the Painting Academy under. Prof. Boris Mitov . Specialized (1943-1944) graphics in Vienna.</p> <p>After September 9, 1944 is actively involved as an artist - art editor in the publishing activities of the State Military Publishing. From 1957 he was professor at the VIII "N. Pavlovich " , Sofia. Doctor of Art (1976).</p>
Tomov, Veselin	1909-1993	Fig, urban landscape	<p>grew up in the town of Byala Slatina.  studied specialty-painting under Professor Nicolas Ganushev Academy in Sofia. He graduated in 1934 with honours.  Germany granted him a scholarship in the late 1930s and he went to Munich. At that time there were many Bulgarian students and graduates - artists, musicians, architects and lawyers. A Bulgarian trader of fruits, buys the still lifes he had brought from Bulgaria. The merchant continually gives Bulgarian fruit - especially grapes and so he began to paint still lifes.  independent artist 41-43 Art Academy Munich</p> <p>At this time closer to German artist Willibald Demmel, with whom he often travels and paints landscapes. His sponsor Prof. Constantine Gerhardinger was dismissed from the Academy and deprived of his studio for opposing Hitler.</p> <p>Vesselin Tomov has already completed four semesters and decided to go back to Bulgaria because of the severe bombing. All his paintings were left in Germany because of the prohibition to export artwork and lost forever.</p> <p>After returning from Germany, Vesselin Tomov spent a year in Sofia in October 1944. moved with his parents in the town of Byala Slatina. There he remained until the end of the year. He painted portraits of friends and children. Illustrated poems of the poet George Veselinov.</p> <p>During 1945. he briefly worked in the Ministry of Information as Head of Fine Arts propaganda through a period in which he often had to show ingenuity and courage to protect national values. An example is the position when a committee of Soviet military wants to requisition paintings from the National Art Gallery. With much tact and perseverance Vesselin Tomov managed to deflect them and lead them</p>



			<p>to the studios of prominent artists, where they buy paintings. So it except that keeps our national wealth helps his colleagues in the difficult post-war years.</p> <p>First solo exhibition February.1947</p> <p>For years Vesselin Tomov works in the field of stamp design, decorative and monumental art. His mosaics and graffito are in Slatina, Dupnitsa, Bulgaria, Kozloduy NPP</p> <p><a href="http://www.galleryloran.com/authors/veselin-tomov-veselin-tomov/paintings">http://www.galleryloran.com/authors/veselin-tomov-veselin-tomov/paintings</a></p>
Tsankov, Maxim	1877-1965		born Razgrad
<p><b>Trichkov, Ivan</b></p> <p>1892-1959 Landscape</p> <p>Born Vratsa. Graduated painting under prof. Petko Klisurov from Art-Industrial School in Sofia.</p> <p>His work is characterized by diversity of colours, play of shadows and penumbras, inspiration, precise lines. Unchanging decor are old farmhouses, shepherds' huts and mountain cabins presented with a rare realism.</p> <p>Favourite artists of King Boris III who had many of his paintings - and also one of my favourites!!</p> <p><a href="#">ARTPRICEbg has more</a></p>			
			
Tringov, Constantin	1907-1981	landscape	born Kazanlak. Densely worked paintings
<p><b>Tsonev, Kiril</b></p> <p></p> <p>1896-1961</p> <p>born Kyustendil.</p> <p>Studied Vienna Art Academy 1920/21 - then Munich Art Academy 1921-25 and stayed there until 1929. .</p> <p>One of the innovators of his time, Influenced by German New Objectivity. Travelled 1930-32 in south america (Mexico and Cuba) and returned to Bulgaria in 1933 after the nazis came to power in Germany.</p> <p>1942-50 he was Professor at Sofia Art Academy - and an art critic and historian.</p> <p><a href="https://www.flickr.com/photos/mihalorel/sets/72157600058418332/detail/">https://www.flickr.com/photos/mihalorel/sets/72157600058418332/detail/</a></p>			
Urumov, Georgi	1891-1957		

<b>Ustagenov, Marin</b>  1872-1937  Spectacular all-rounder born in Russe; studies art in Sofia and specialised in restoration skills in Munich. - then becoming one of the first Bulgarian restorers and conservatives Founder of Lada school. Was a war artist 1912-18 and struggled to exist - with various unsuccessful business ventures He participated in the restoration of Boyana Church and Monastery Zemen Because dealing with the business until his death in 1937, after the September 9 putch, was declared an enemy of the people, his heirs -. harassment, and pictures Ustagenov - kicked out of the curriculum at the Academy of Arts an under-rated painter in my view			
Uzenov, Dechko	1899-1986	portrait	born Kazanluk. Bulgaria's Picasso 1922/23 Munich. Teacher Art Academy Sofia 1924-1932; 1937 Professor and from 1945 its rector. The Dechko Uzunov gallery possesses 13,000 oil paintings, water colors, drawings, designs and sketches by Uzunov. The works were donated to the Sofia municipality by his heirs: artists Hristo Neikov, Atanas Neikov, Elena Vulchanova and Penyo Vulchanov. The gallery is housed in Uzunov's workshop on Dragan Tsankov Boulevard, a two-story building in the compound of the artist's house.  An overrated artist for me!
Valchanov, Ivan	1889-1953		Born Kazanlak Grad 1914 Teacger Lom, Harmanli War artist Friend of Bozhinov, Dmitrov, Sht Teacher Kazanlak. Karlovo and VT From 1935 Sofia
Valkanov, Dmitr	1907-1997	battle canvases, portraits, figural compositions and landscapes	born on May 13, 1907 in the village Aprilovo District. Graduated (1934) Painting at <a href="#">the Academy of Arts</a> in Sofia, with Prof. <a href="#">Nikola Marinov</a> / from whom he inherited the picturesque feeling / and master Dimitar Gyudzhenov historical paintings, which ignited his interest in recreating history. longtime head of the military artists studio, a veteran of World War II. draws a number of paintings on this subject: "Destroyed Budapest" (1949), "August 1941 - native shore" (1961). famous paintings: 'Spring near Sofia "(1958)," Reflection "(1959)," Waiting "(1959 His father is the artist and author of tales Venelin Valkanov.
Vasilev, Stoian	1904-1977	landscape	Born Pazardzhik. In 1927 he graduated from the National Academy of Arts in Sofia, arts of painting with Prof. Tzeno Todorov. He preferred themes from the Veliko Tarnovo region. A really prolific creator. He worked in various formats. Professor of arts of painting at St. St. Cyril and Methodius University of Veliko Tarnovo for many years.

## Velchev, Georgi

1891-1955

one of the great masters of the seascape .

born on November 18, 1891 in Varna. From 1910 to 1920 (with two interruptions due to World War I) are painting at the State Art - Industrial School in Sofia at Ivan Mrkvicka and Stefan Ivanov.

Even in his earliest works from 1917 - 1920 r. tends towards modern and liberated picturesque imagery that gravitates to the Impressionist , symbolist. Part of the generation of artists such as Nicolai Raynov Ivan Milev , Vassil Zahariev and some others who in the late 1910s and early 1920s trying to resist traditional realism From 1920 to 1922 Velchev lives in Paris. Magnificent Oil and gouache works created then showed his affection for the style of Pierre Bonnard

...contemplation of romantic and sometimes mystical view of nature and man



In 1923, he resides in Germany - Munich , Berlin, Bremen.

There are well received exhibitions in Karlsruhe and Wiesbaden roam and paint in the mountains of Tyrol, visiting Italy . He was invited by the famous symbolist and expressionist Heinrich Fogeler in the famous artistic colony in Worpswede near Bremen. In this period Georgi Velchev is a European artist who gives meaning and eagerly accepts the impulses of the new art in its very center .

In 1924 he was already in New York, where he resided until 1931 and made eight exhibitions. Traveled to Miami , San Francisco, Philadelphia, visited Canada and Hawaii . The economic crisis in the U.S. forcing him to return to Bulgaria , where he remained until the end of his life. He visited Australia and China.

In Bulgaria, the artist lives and works in his native house in Varna. He continues his tireless journey - in villages and towns in mountainous and coastal areas - and contemplate the life of the small Bulgarian world. Creates in his paintings poetry sunny courtyards of old tilted Vratnica , bridges and fountains, rural and urban houses and streets. In this type of picture it is comparable to artists such as Nikola Taney and Daniel Detchev .

But most attracted to the sea as a pictorial motif . Prefers to interpret filled with rich symbolism meeting between the sea and the lonely cliff . In these landscapes especially haunting tension, a dramatic feeling , and sometimes symbolic spirit. Comparable only with paintings of Alexander Mutafov .

Georgi Velchev was a proud, freedom-loving person , adamant and forthright in expressing his views . He was one of many artists who, after 1944, was rejected by the authorities and died poor and destitute . His most famous self-portrait from 1948 shows a mature and dignified artist whose gaze shows scepticism and disappointment.

Velkov, Simeon	1885-1963	Landscape, portraits	Born in Panagurishte. - Graduated (1910 ) Painting in the <a href="#">Industrial School of Arts</a> , Sofia, (now <a href="#">NAA</a> ) with Prof. <a href="#">Ivan Mrkvicka</a> . Visited many museums in Italy and Germany. High school teacher in Plovdiv and Asenovgrad (until 1923), professor (1926-1947) at the <a href="#">Art Academy</a> , Sofia. During the Balkan war in the press cooperate with drawings and creates a number of battle works. Illustrates historical works and textbooks. Most of his works are in the Museum of Military History in Sofia, <a href="#">Sofia City Art Gallery</a> , the galleries in Plovdiv, Gabrovo, Strajitsa and elsewhere. was awarded the title of Honored Artist. He died on September 10, 1963 in Sofia.
Venev, Stoian	1904-1989	all genres	born Skriniano village, Kyestendil wwhere he spent his school years. Met Vladimir Dmitrov there and was strongly influenced by him. Graduated from Sofia art school in 1931. Created images of everyday life and Bulgarian villages - with a strong satirical tone. Apparently

			influenced by G Grosz
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## Vesin, Jaroslav

1860-1915

a [Czech](#) painter who worked in [Bulgaria](#) and who was noted as a master of [genre painting](#). The realistic depiction of battle scenes from the [First Balkan War](#) (1912) are the subject of a substantial part of his work.

Věšín studied at the [Academy of Fine Arts in Prague](#), but moved to the [Academy of Fine Arts Munich](#) in 1881 and graduated in 1883. Afterwards he worked in [Munich](#) and in [Slovakia](#), with his paintings of the period mainly related to [Slovak](#) village life.

Věšín arrived in Bulgaria in 1897 and remained there for the remainder of his life. Until 1904, he was a professor at the [National Academy of Fine Arts in Sofia](#) and mainly worked in the area of genre painting, with notable paintings such as [Threshing near Radomir](#) (1897), [Ploughman \(or Land, 1899\)](#), [Horse market in Sofia](#) (1899), [Smugglers](#) (1899), [In front of a market](#) (1899), [Threshing](#) (1900), etc. The main topic of his interest was the life and labour of the Bulgarian villager.

After 1904, Věšín became the head painter with the [Ministry of War](#) and, although he did not abandon his old interests (with works such as [Coalers](#) (1910), [Lumberjacks](#) (1910), [On the game's track](#) (1910), [Hunter with hounds](#) (1911), etc.), he became famous with his masterpieces of battle painting: [Manoeuvres](#) (series began in 1899 and lasted until the [Balkan Wars](#), The [Samara flag](#) (1911), [Onslaught \(or Bayonet charge, 1913\)](#), The Turkish retreat at [Lüleburgaz](#) (1913), [Lüleburgaz-Catalca](#) (1913) and a series of sketches and complete works on the [siege of Edirne](#), among which [Bibouac in front of Edirne](#) (1913), [Resting after 13 March 1913](#) (1913), etc.

Many of his works are displayed in the [National Museum of Fine Arts](#) in Sofia. Among Věšín's students were [Nikola Petrov](#), [Atanas Mihov](#) and other major Bulgarian painters.

The father of the artist, Frantisek Vesin , a physician by profession , is an active participant in the struggle for liberation of their homeland. Activity gets death sentence, but shortly before the execution and pardoned . To be saved from further persecution , settled in picturesque Czech town of Vranje . Here, on May 26, 1860 was born painter Jaroslav Veshin future . His mother, / home German woman / out of respect for her husband, she does not speak German to him , but formed in their children homage to the music of Beethoven, Haydn and Schubert . She fell in love creativity of the Czech Smetana .

Although two floors , their home was modest. As a child , Jaroslav filled his notebooks with drawings . This passion led his father to sacrifices in order to allow the son to enroll at the Prague Academy of Arts. After completing 1876-1880 / Veshin soldier entered the service in Slovakia and its specific costumes and customs leave a lasting impression on him. To improve his skills , he continued his studies in Munich. There began his real career in art . He lives Theresienstr and his studio is Landvershtrase where he visited many friends and admirers . Established a very close friendship with the writer Slovak Svetozar Urban Vayanski . Very soon in the artist begins to exist the idea that the Slavic peoples could obtain its natural place among other European nations only through general assistance and cultural activity.

Jaroslav Veshin was rated almost immediately , even with his first mature compositions. Acquires prestige and international renown.. Among his closest admirers and patrons is Prince Regent Luitpold of Bavaria . He is a passionate hunter and simultaneously





has large interests in the arts. His father, Emperor Ludwig, whose mysterious death of Shttarnberger lake is among the events of the stories told German history, supported Richard Wagner. Prince Ludwig unexpectedly located in Jaroslaw no less passionate connoisseur of nature and its inhabitants, of customs, of weapons of good outings, tireless, fearless ...

"Tall, slender, with a good view, nice smile, a thick as Chatel neprigladena hair, long mustache, pointed beard, wearing glasses ..." - this seventeen-year Cornelia describes her first impression of nine years older than her still unknown artist Jaroslav. She was with her parents at the resort of Zbraslav. Her enormous family, over 15 people have taken the house of an old fisherman. "My yard is large and great river for all of you" - he said while being installed. With new insights begin to meet in secret, though her mother does not approve it because he was a man of Bohemia and do not know what the future would. And the instructions are great party ... / brother- and held in Prague private gallery "Rukh" and communicated with a number of artists /



In 1897, at the invitation of the Bulgarian Minister of Education Konstantin Velichkov Czech artist Jaroslav Veshin arrived in Bulgaria to teach at the newly opened School of Art in Sofia. So Veshin became one of the most significant foreign artists who have devoted their lives to Bulgaria.

A lot of courage and adventurousness were needed Jaroslav Veshin to arrive in Bulgaria in 1897 during this risky step the Czech was an established artist who has neither of recognition or money. The only thing that inspired him to come to Sofia, was a noble desire to help a toddler art.

Jaroslav Veshin comes to live in Bulgaria in the name of his Slavic ideal. Risking much.

In Bulgaria Veshin born and his daughters - Cornelia and Hope ...

In Sofia family Veshin first inhabited over the ground, first floor of a corner of the "September 6" and "Graf Ignatiev". From below, beneath them are bakery, butcher and grocery.

In 1899 Veshinovi move to "L.Karavelov" and "Gourko" - opposite Zoo.

Morning family it would awaken the roar of the lion. Its hunting accessories adorned him Artist studio.

Immediately after arriving in Sofia Veshin started painting various subjects, which reflected domestic scenes, rural labor market dynamic city, romance little-known natural areas. At the same time he continued his work in art

school, where dozens of famous artists prepared, including Nikola Petrov, Atanas Mihov, Elizabeth Konsoulova Vazova. In 1903, due to disagreements with the management of the school he left his teaching post. At the same time you receive an invitation to become a court painter in Germany and Austria-Hungary. But to the astonishment of many of his friends, he preferred Bulgaria.

In 1904 became a war artist and thus established as the father of Bulgarian battle genre painting. Most of his best paintings from this period are shown in the exhibition of the Military Museum. His works reflect the ugly and bloody scenes of two wars (1912-1913), Morbid and suffering of the people in these crucial years.

Leaving the front along with the army, he managed to create his famous paintings "The Turkish Retreat at Lyuleburgaz", "on vacation after 13 March" and the famous "Bayonet" became a symbol of the courage of the Bulgarian Army.

Veshin continued to paint almost until his death, which occurred suddenly on May 6, 1915 His outstanding performance was notorious. Renowned literary critic Andrei Ongoing wonders in a letter: "He runs continuously from 6 to 12 and 14 to 18 hours - and at other times observe the battlefield." So the legacy that Veshin left behind is extremely rich with its historical and artistic value. Moreover - he managed to do what many compatriots do not want or know how - to become fond of Bulgaria more than people born in it.

<http://alneg008.blogspot.com/2013/02/1860-1915.html>

Vulchev, Nikola	1897-1984	Landscape. figurative	Born in the village of Mokresh, region of Vidin. In 1924 he graduated from the Academy of Arts - Sofia, art of painting the class of Prof. Stefan Ivanov. For long years he was a teacher in Lom and Sofia. For the period 1931-1952 he had lectures in painting at the Institute of Secondary School Masters in Sofia.
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Vulchev, Vasil	1931-2002	painting and graphics	graduated 1955 under Ilya Petrov
Vulev, Vassil	1934 -	village life, small groups, portrait	born Sigmen, Burgas. gouache, aquarelle favourite techniques
Vulkev, Pavel	1908-1956	Aquarelles Aquatint engraving	Born Burgas 1936 graduated Sofia Art Academy under Nikola Marinov and Vassil Zahariev (graphics) Focused on port scenes  1953 Reader at Pavlovich Art School, Sofia
Watson, William	1894-??	portraits, landscapes compositions from the urban and rural lifestyle, thematic still-life and painting	born in Paisley, Scotland.  During World War I he was an officer. He remained in the Allied mission in Bulgaria and then he settled in Bulgaria.  William Watson was educated of a textile engineer. In 1931, he became stockowner and a representative of Bulgaria OOD, Kazanluk for production and trade with threads and textiles.  In 1924, he married Theodora Popova – daughter of the regional governor of Varna, Vassil Popov. After 1930 the Watson family settled in Sofia in the house of Professor Al. Balan, N 4 Kliment Ohridski Street.
Zadgorski, Petko	1902-1974		Born Sliven. From early left an orphan, he was raised in the spirit of patriotism and patriotism of his grandmother Anna, Educated at the Art Academy / 1924-1928 / under of Professor Dimitar Gyudzhenov, an artist whose work celebrates Bulgarian history. Then in Burgas and remained there for the rest of his life, his romantic attitude overflows into love for the sea. He studied by the researchers tides, sunsets, which sank somewhere beyond the horizon. Long walks into the sea.... "Fog over raid," "Boats" "Landscape from salinas" impressionist show direction of his search.  You can almost hear the splash of the waves, the cry of seagulls ...  He influences the next generation of artists Burgas - Georgi Baev, Genko Genkov Vladimir Goev, Todor Atanasov. . <a href="http://www.galleryloran.com/authors/petko-zadgorski-petko-zadgorski/paintings">http://www.galleryloran.com/authors/petko-zadgorski-petko-zadgorski/paintings</a>
Zagarov, Spas	1908-1991	graphics; aquarelle landscapes	born village outside Kazanluk; Director Plovdiv municipal art gallery

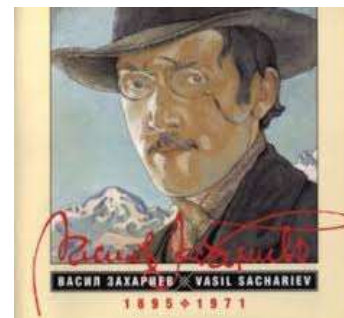
## Zahariev, Vassil

1895-1971  
graphics

Born Samokov - considered the founder of Bulgarian graphic.

<http://alneg008.blogspot.com/2013/02/1895-1971.html>

In 1911 he entered the Industrial School of Arts in Sofia, where he graduated in 1919, after a long break (1912-1913, and 1915-1918) during which took part in the wars in decorative art and graphic Prof. Zeno Todorov, Professor Haralampi Tachev and Stefan Badjov. In 1921, a short time as a teacher in Samokov, but between 1922 and 1924 State Academy specializes in Graphic Arts in Leipzig with Prof. A. Kolb and Professor H. Muller. Since 1924, after his return to Bulgaria, is a professor of graphic and decorative arts at the Art Academy in 1929 - an extraordinary professor, and from 1934 to 1945 - full professor. Vassil Zahariev rector of the Academy between 1939 and 1943 His students are Georgi Gerasimov, Zdravko Alexandrov, Veselin Staikov, Preslav Karshovski, Vasil Stoilov and others.



In 1920 he had his first exhibition in Sofia, which displays his style in the spirit of national tradition, but with a contemporary vision and craftsmanship. Author's lithographs and black and white and color woodcuts and linoleum.

Zachariev works in the field of applied arts - bookplates, shaping and bookbinding, art addresses, stamps, banknotes and other folk inserting trim. He is the first Bulgarian artist whose works are at the international exhibition of the library sign (in 1929 in Zagreb). His works are owned by Bulgarian and foreign galleries.

In 1928 initiated the announcement in the Official Gazette a list of architectural and artistic monuments of national importance to be subject to protection of the law for the protection of national antiquities. Zachariev is among the people who have contributed most to the museum in his home town of Samokov. In the period 1959 - 1961, he worked at the BAS Institute of Fine Arts, where he was Head of the Department of Fine Arts. He actively participated in the artistic life of the country - a member of the "Modern Art", the "Native Art" (to whom is the Chairman), the Society of Independent Artists.



Zachariev participated in almost all general art exhibitions and exhibitions of "native art", but particularly large participation in many international general and graphic exhibitions abroad: Zagreb (1927), Venice (1928, 1942), Warsaw (1929, 1936), Los Angeles (1934), Chicago (1937), Paris (1927), New York (1938), Athens (1940), Berlin (1941-1942), Budapest (1934), Prague (1947), Lugano (1954), Ljubljana (1955), London (1955, 1965), Moscow (1958), São Paulo (1963) and others.

Both creative and educational activities. In his research is particularly interested in the Renaissance, applied arts and in particular the illustration and decoration of the book.

Died November 29, 1971 in Sofia.

## Zankov, Doncho

1893-1960

high mountain landscapes, frequently winter ones

Born in Sevlievo.

He was an artist with First Bulgarian Army during the First World War (1914 - 1918).

In 1921 he graduated from the Industrial School of Arts in Sofia.

He worked as teacher in the village of Tarkva, region of Pernik. He was also a teacher in Sofia. Initially he used to draw water-colour drawings, afterwards oils.

His colours are such that I sometimes confuse him with Trichkov ....



Zhekov, Atanas	1926-2006	landscapes	Director of Sofia City gallery  Doesn't, in my view, get the recognition he deserves
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### Zhekov, Mario

1898-1955

Coasts and sea



born Stara Zagora..

In 1917 became a student at the Bulgarian Academy of Fine Arts in Sofia. Two years later he enrolled in the Painting Drawing School of Paris.

In 1921 he moved to Constantinople Turkey-where he made First Constantinople's cycle. In this cycle he recreates the Bosphorus. The castle, the port and near the city.

In 1927 returned to Bulgaria and went to the Black Sea-there he painted Sozopol, Nessebar.

In 1930 he moved to the southern Mediterranean Italy, France. Two years later he returned to his homeland. Here he finish his second Black Sea cycle-scales of Sozopol and Nessebar, Varna, Balchik, Ropotamo Kamchia and also landscapes.

In 1937 he moved to Dalmatia. In Dubrovnik he created some of the

most important and remarkable of his painting.

Many of this works he presented in many galleries in Croatia, Prague, Budapest, Bucharest.

He became more popular in Europe, than in Bulgaria.

In 1938. made exhibitions in Stara Zagora and in Sofia. In 1941, went to Greece, Aegean, Aegean Sea, there he painted in the islands of Thassos, Chios, Samothrace and Ohridkoto lake.

In 1943 Mario Zhekov returned to Sofia. With the help of artist Pencho Balkanski organized most representative exhibition. Part of it he shows in Bucharest and in 1946 - in Stara Zagora.

His paintings now normally sell for a minimum of 1,500 euros - and usually much more.

Zhelev, Zahari	1868-1942		Born Kaz 1893-98 Turin Art teacher Shumen 1898-1906 From then Kazanluk teacher
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### Zhelezarov, Georgi

1897-1982

landscapes, subject paintings, urban sceneries,

One of the classics of Bulgarian landscape and genre painting.

After success in 1941, disappear from the artistic scene The circle of friends, with which Georgi Zhelezarov shares his work, is limited to a few, among who his best man Boris Denev, and Preslav Karshovski. His studio though, has no limits. It is Pirin, Rila, Vitosha mountains, the Sofia field, the City Park, Constantinople, Marocco, Florence, Tunise, Algiers (1926-1928).

His landscapes are covered with light, always populated with people, painted as is characteristic for pantheism, proportionally much smaller in comparison to nature. In this sense, his landscapes carry particular elements of romanticism. With his attitude to the subject of art, and the creative act, he naturally joins the number of Bulgarian painters after

World War One, who try to revive the academic realism through naturalistic painting,

<http://www.galleryloran.com/authors/georgi-jelezarov-georgi-zhelezarov/paintings>

600 euros 32x42



Zhelyazkov, Gospodin	1873-1937		<p>born Demircha village, Romania. Graduated in painting under Prof. I. Mrkviska and Prof. B. Mitov from the Academy of Fine Arts - Sofia in 1899. Graduated from the Studio of Ilya Repin. Secretary of the Union of the South Bulgarian Artists "Lada" and one of the initiators for the grounding of the Union of the Artists - icon-painters and wood engravers /1925</p>
Zhendov, Alexander	1901-53	cartoons, graphics	<p>born Sofia. As early as 1917 he was contributing cartoons to various magazines. From 1923-25, he was extra-curricular student in painting at Sofia Art School (under Marinov)</p> <p>One of the "fathers" of the Bulgarian cartoon. 22 of his cartoons stored in artistic pool "Humor of Nations", "House of Humour and Satire" in Gabrovo. He also illustrated books.</p> <p>Police repression then forced him to seek refuge first in Vienna then Germany (1926-30). Grosz, Kollwitz and Masserel had a great influence on him.</p> <p>He studied graphic and decorative art in Berlin, and in 1930 graduated from the Higher Artistic-Technical Institute in Moscow. Returned to Bulgaria 1930</p> <p>Communist since before World War II, Author of many political cartoons and graphics printed in almost all newspapers. In his work has clearly expressed his sympathy for the poor and disadvantaged.</p> <p>In 1950 published a critical letter about socialist realism for which he was expelled from the Communist Party and Union of Artists - thereby finding it impossible to get painting commissions.</p>
Zlatareva, Binka	1891-1972		
Zlatev, Nikola	1907-1989		

## 12. I had [a little list](#)!

Well this has been quite a ride! The journey started more than four years ago after I became interested in the Bulgarian realist painters of the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and started to compile "a little list" (literally on the back of an envelope!) of those my friends in Sofia recommended me to have a look at.

My father loved Gilbert and Sullivan operettas - *The Pirates of Penzance* was one of his favourites and the phrase "I have a little list" was, in the last century, a famous catchphrase. [This video starts with a modern spoof](#) - but with the words of the original song inscribed in the last part of the video....

My particular "little list" became in 2012 a small booklet of 46 pages and has grown in the past few months to become a book of almost 200 pages! Well not quite a book.....more a collection of musings and of hyperlinks to the amazing richness of the web - and the images, text and music it contains....

I said at the start that the best way to learn about a subject is to (try to) write a book about it.....and this, for the moment, is my book.....

It is, of course, a very "partial" take on the country being rather biased toward some aesthetic pleasures which in themselves form only a small part of the rich cultural experience available...

Indeed it's probably only an ignorant foreigner who would have the audacity to try to sketch a picture of a country. Locals tend to be overwhelmed by the scale of work available in their language - and outsiders can sometimes see things they can't. A fellow Scot (Rabbie Burns) put it rather well all of 230 years ago -

*O wad some Power the [giftie gie](#) us  
To see oursels as ithers see us!  
It wad [frae](#) mony a blunder free us,  
An' foolish notion:  
What airs in dress an' gait [wad](#) lea'e us,  
[An'](#) ev'n devotion!*

A couple of my Bulgarian friends published recently two massive books - Ivan Daraktchiev an amazing 600 page mixture of text and photos on the country and its history (in English) - a tribute to the country he's been out of the country for almost 30 years. Ruhmen Manev has a glorious 700 page collection of old photographs with brief (bilingual) text. But, two decades ago, I have recently discovered, it was a Belgian academic (Raymond Detrez) who set the gold standard with a 900-page compendium [Historical Dictionary of Bulgaria](#) (the Scarecrow Press 2006)

His is a very big "little list"!!

Fortunately, I found that the very day I thought I was putting this particular book to bed - I say "fortunately" because if I had known of this opus earlier, I would never have dared put this collection together....

*Which perhaps raises the question I should have posed at the very start.....what exactly is the purpose of this book?*

The purpose of the 2012 booklet was quite clear - it was to help draw the Bulgarian painting tradition to the attention of those foreigners visiting Sofia who were unaware of that



tradition....1000 copies (complete with a CD) were printed and distributed to the various municipal galleries, Embassies, a few of the main hotels and my gallery friends..... there's still a forlorn copy propped up in the window of Yassen's little gallery on Asparuh Street and there's a pdf version on both of my websites - [Introducing the Bulgarian Realists - how to get to know the Bulgarians through their paintings](#).

I can't say it had any obvious results.....noone has reported on sudden surge of interest in the subject.....But any Bulgarian I present the book to immediately treats me with respect - it's a great calling card!

And I have slowly realised that most of the Guidebooks have it wrong.....they fail to appreciate the basic rule for any attempt to help another person get from point A to point B - whether that journey involves sights, skills or insights - and that rule is "*put yourself in the other's shoes*"!!!

Most people who visit Bulgaria will fly in and stay in one place - whether it is a Black Sea resort; a skiing town; or Sofia itself.....you simply won't read all the detailed accounts of the delights to be found on the entire territory of the country.

Nor, of course, do you want to read about 200 dead foreigners who happened to be artists....!! But, as I said at the beginning, it does represent a "different way of seeing" .....

It was the émigré writer and painter John Berger who, in the early 1970s first used this phrase "[ways of seeing](#)" which I have found myself using with increasing frequency.

We're all aware that we all have different ways of looking at the world - some are optimists, others pessimists....

Some of us look up at the roofs and sky (with all the risks that involves!) and know that it gives us a very different view of things from that of those who keep their eyes lower and almost seem to be looking for a lost bank-note!

Living in a foreign country - not watching television or reading the newspapers - is like looking at a country through the wrong end of a telescope.....it distances you.....old books assume greater significance for you....the faces of long-dead artists reach out to you from black and white photographs....and have you thinking about the lives they led.....

This collection is a pot-pourri of memories about a country. Metaphors should be mixed - like colours.....so, although the original booklet had "realist painting" as its core, perhaps my tastes are changing and I am beginning to slap the paint on a bit more..... "impressionistically" in my old age.

Ronald G Young  
[www.nomadron.blogspot.com](http://www.nomadron.blogspot.com)

6 February 2015

## Annex 1: Notes on the Galleries

Bulgaria is a great country to tour around. Amazing scenery, great wines and food! Its many municipal galleries are an additional bonus.

Here I simply reproduce the comments I posted on my blog after my visits - and, regrettably, I have not been able to visit them all. Burgas and Sinistra, for example, remains to be conquered.

**Please note that this information is correct at the time of printing but should be verified.**

## Sofia

### Sofia City Art Gallery

1, Gen. Gurko Str

<http://sqhq.bg>

**working hours:**

Tuesday-Saturday: 10 a.m. - 7 p.m.

Sunday: 11 a.m. - 6 p.m.

Monday: day off

**admission: now charges 3 leva (pensioners free)**

The City Gallery has no permanent exhibition but plays a crucial role in putting on special exhibitions which not only bring out paintings from its own large collection but exhibit paintings from the other municipal and private collections. Exhibitions in recent years have focussed on people such as Dobri Dobrev and Nikolay Boiadjev. In 2010, the Gallery curator Dr. Maria Vassileva started a fascinating series ("The other Eye") which consists of inviting outsiders to comb the dungeons of the gallery where the collections are stored, strip off the protective covering and select some paintings. So far, three such exhibitions have been held - each with a very useful booklet.

### The National Gallery

1 Prince Alexander Sq

<http://www.nationalartgallerybg.org/index.php?l=59>

closed Mondays

A lovely building which was, previously, the Royal Palace.....A fitting fate - if only Buckingham Palace were so used!!

I'm always a bit iffy about the place - its management is so much less imaginative than that of the City Gallery just 5 minutes's walk across the square - the contrast to me showing the superiority of municipal management!! For more on this see [the interesting conversation](#) I had with the Director of another City Gallery.

Their catalogues which are supposed to accompany exhibitions now rarely arrive during the exhibition - 6 months after the superb exhibition in August 2014 of Moutafov seascapes, we still await the catalogue..... And, despite the example set across the road by the municipal gallery, they rarely take paintings out of their extensive archives.....

Lack of translation is another of the features which used to distinguish the National Gallery from the municipal one whose catalogues have been bilingual for quite some years. Pricing is a third - the National Gallery used to charge 5 euros (now 3 - with pensioners half price). The municipal gallery was free - until last year when a nominal charge was introduced (with pensioners free).

It reminded me of one of my political colleagues in the 1970s [Janey Buchan](#) (who became an MEP in 1979), She was a tireless advocate in the 60s of the rights of ordinary people (before the days of the Consumer Association) and was particularly strong on the importance of free entry to museums and art galleries, Thatcher put pressure on to introduce charges ([although the British Museum held out](#)) but entry was made free again in 2001 - with significant subsequent increases in visitors.

So let me take my hat off to them for their display in December of digital facilities. I was a bit annoyed to be denied access to an exhibition of Nouveau Art's Nikola Rainov (for reasons of some private party) but was placated by being given the opportunity to use a smart phone to access some 200 watercolours of the past century which have not so far been available to the public - along with useful information about the painters. This is apparently part of a wider project of gradual digitization of the entire archive of the museum in 2015. Nous y verrons!!

I managed to see the Rainov exhibition the following day - you don't often see his work. And it was accompanied by a superb small catalogue - sadly almost entirely monolingual.

Running in a neighbouring room, was another delightful small exhibition of urban life here a hundred years ago - with a charming video of an elderly lady displaying various artefacts from the period.

And my ever-ready camera was able to catch this shot of a very sharply-dressed visitor to the gallery.....with a Rainov display behind....



## Atelier and Collection of Svetlin Roussev

18 Vrabcha St  
02 987 96 98

- An amazing place I discovered only recently. Roussev is Bulgaria's Grand Old Man of Art. Painter, and Art Historian, he amassed a large collection of Bulgarian art during his time which he has gifted to two public collections - one in Pleven, the other in Sofia at what used to be his studio very near the Alexander Nevsky Church. This also contains a huge library of art books which is freely available for consultations

## Balchik Art Gallery

4 Otets Paisiy St  
tel.: +359 579 41 30      +359 579 41 30      , 43 09

The small town which clings to the white sandstone cliffs is popular with both Bulgarians and Romanians - it is only 30 kilometres or so from the border and did indeed belong to Romania for almost 30 years. After the Second Balkan War, in 1913, the town, styled Balcic, became part of the Kingdom of Romania and was much loved by its Queen Mary. It was regained by Bulgaria during World War I (1916-1919), but Romania restored its authority when hostilities in the region ceased. Quite a lot of the Romanian bourgeoisie built villas - many of which have collapsed due to the soil subsidence which is a problem in the area.

But in 1940, just before the outbreak of World War II in the region, Balchik was ceded by Romania to Bulgaria. When we were last here - 10 years ago (on the way back from a trip to Turkey) - our landlady lowered her voice to speak Romanian

The town's art gallery has paintings from that period by Romanian artists - who were charmed by the strong muslim air the town had in those days. [The gallery's website](#) understandably uses the language of "occupation" when it talks about "the group of eleven Romanian artists who have painted Balchik during the occupation of Dobroudzha". The group includes two favourites of mine - Alexandru Satmari and Samuel Mutzner. Many Bulgarian artists have taken the air here - not least Mario Zhekov - and the area also boasts famous cliffs further north which figure in many paintings.

Sadly, however, the permanent collection was closed - due to reconstruction (as with Shumen, the charming young woman could offer no firm date for its re-opening). But a few of the Romanian paintings were on display - as well as a temporary exhibition of paintings by an 84 year old Nedelcho Nanov - mostly miniatures of the area painted variously in the 1960s and 2000s. He is now based in Sofia - and this "Interior" was, for me, particularly intriguing.



## Burgas - Petko Zadgorski Gallery

"Metropolit Simeon" Str.24

tel: +359 56/84-21-69

- one of the few municipal galleries I have not yet visited

## Dobrich Art Gallery

9300 Dobrich, 14 Bulgaria, Bulgaria St

tel.: +359 58 28 215      +359 58 28 215      , 29 091

Exposition: paintings, prints, sculpture

Highlights: works by Vladimir Dimitrov- the Master, Bencho Obreshkov, Alexander Petrov, Ivan Markvichka, Zlatyu Boyadzhiev, Dechko Ouzounov, Naiden Petkov and others, a collection of foreign prints.

Open: 9 - 12 a.m., 1 - 5 p.m.

Closed: summer: Sundays and Mondays; winter: Saturdays and Sundays

The Director very graciously gave us a personal tour of her domain. It started with a group of schoolkids who were receiving some interactive training in the process of paper-making - the gallery, uniquely, has a collection of paperworks produced by the participants of a recent international event held here.

Separate sections are devoted to the gallery's collection of sculptures and prints - and to local artists as well as old masters such as a rare work of Ivan Mrkvichka (1856-1938), one of two Czechs (the other is Jaroslav Vesin) who are credited with setting Bulgarian painting on its modern path.

The breadth of the collection is one of the widest I have seen (with a nice mix of older and contemporary).

The exhibition space is so extensive that the tour took more than an hour.

I was very taken with some contemporary work by Plaven Valchev (born 1951).

I have been nicely received in all the municipal galleries I have visited in the Bulgaria regions - but this is the only one where I was able to have a proper conversation about the problems of running galleries here at this time. Over a cup of tea, Evelina (like all the Directors I've met here) an artist herself explained that it is the Ministry of Culture who set a formula which dictates the number of staff to which regional galleries are entitled. So much for local government autonomy!! And, in Dobrich's case, with such a huge palace, the staff of 12 (including 2 cleaners and 3 attendants) is simply insufficient. There is no surveillance system - so security is labour-intensive.

As was evident from the number of brochures, the Director is highly proactive in seeking out opportunities for marketing and funding (A Swiss Foundation was mentioned) and the Gallery's CD lists the various international exhibitions (eg China and Slovakia) which have been mounted with the support of Embassies here. But it is an uphill struggle - a good venture of bussing tourists from the beaches nearby during the summer fizzled out. It is not easy to produce a winning formula for such a problem. But one thing is clear for me - it requires local solutions and this means removing the dead hand of central control - and encouraging networking between galleries (national and international), hotels, businesses (eg the new owners of the rich agricultural land and the golf courses!!) and educational establishments. Don't get me wrong - national financial support needs to be maintained (otherwise the galleries could be at more risk)) but on the basis of more imagination.....

## **Kardjali - Stanka Dimitrova art gallery**

Kardjali has all the bustle and townscape of a Turkish town. I was able, with some difficulty, to locate the art gallery - rather small but some great paintings - including the great Atanas Mihov and the delightful Stefan Ivanov.

## **Kavarna - The Art Gallery**

9650 Kavarna, Bulgaria, 1 Aheloi St

tel.: [+359 570 84 236](tel:+35957084236) [+359 570 84 236](tel:+35957084236)

## **Kazanluk Art Gallery**

Permanent exhibition

Address: SS Cyril and Methodius "№ 9

Contacts: Tel: 0431 / 63762

E-mail [artgallery.kz @ gmail.com](mailto:artgallery.kz@gmail.com)

In addition to the magic of the rose and the oil wealth of the Thracian art, Kazanlak is also famous as a city of artists. Here, many artists are born, some of which have marked some of the highest peaks in Bulgarian art, such as: Ivan Milev, Ivan Penkov, Dechko Uzunov, Nenko Balkanski, Vasil Barakov and others. It is therefore not accidental that Kazanlak owns one of the oldest and richest art galleries in the country.

I was warmly received by the staff who introduced me to their collection which includes several pieces by one of my favourite Bulgarian painters - *Stanio Stamatov* - one of many local painters. Indeed the small town was so prolific with artists that it used to be called "the town of a hundred painters". The collection is therefore a rich one - of both paintings and sculptures - and, amongst those whose acquaintance I made were *Vasil Barakov* (1902-1991); a sculptor *Hristo Peshev* (1923-2000); and *Spas Zavgrov* (1908-1991) born in a nearby village whose landscapes and portrait sketches were in a temporary exhibition funded by his family. Hristo Genev, the Director, welcomed me into his den and presented me with a couple of discs (one of his own material). He sculpts the most fascinating pieces from wood. This is a gallery worth a detour to see - and many revisits!



## **Kyustendil – Vladimir Dmitrov (Maistora) Gallery**

"Patriarh Evtimii" St. No. 20

78-55-0029: Curator

78-52-3172: Director

### **Opening Hours**

Summer time : 09:00 - 12:00 14:00 - 18:00

Winter time: 09:00 - 12:00 13:00 - 17:00

Housed in the ugliest concrete bunker I have ever seen. Dmitrov (The Master) is one of Bulgaria's most famous painters. I'm not actually a fan of a lot of his stuff particularly not one of his trademarks - a face in front of a lot of crudely painted and brightly coloured flowers - but it was good to visit this collection and see a wider range of his paintings. I was taken with some of his earlier, smaller paintings - sunrises and sunsets; his mother; his father - and some multiple face silhouettes. His *Peasant with a hoe* which is in the Sofia City Gallery is very graceful.

## **Pleven – Ilyia Beshkov Gallery**

Director - phone/fax: + 359 64/802091

Working hours:

9.00 - 12.00 a.m., 1.00 - 5.00 p.m.

Closed: Sunday and Monday

The first floor presents the works of Nikolay Pavlovich, Anton Mitov, Ivan Markvicka, Tseno Todorov, Stefan Ivanov, David Perez and many others. The sculptures of Ivan Lazarov, Angel Spasov, Ivan Funev, Marko Markov and other sculptors who had worked in the period to 1940 are included in the exposition.

Pleven also hosts the art collection of one of Bulgaria's most famous artists, art functionary and collector Svetlin Rushev

## **Plovdiv**

The old town of Plovdiv is well worth a visit - with its cobbled streets, stunning National Revival houses, Roman amphitheatre and several galleries.

### **City Art Gallery**

"Saborna" St. No. 14a

32-635-322: Director

[www.galleryplovdiv.com](http://www.galleryplovdiv.com)

working hours (summer):

Open every day (Thursday free)

10.00-12.30

13.00-18.00

### **Art Gallery-Museum Philippopolis**

29 Saborna str., Plovdiv 4000, Bulgaria

e-mail: [gallery@philippopolis.com](mailto:gallery@philippopolis.com)

tel.: +359 32 622 742

tel.: +359 32 624 851

This is actually a private gallery housed in a magnificent old Bulgarian house in the old heart of the town which was rescued and brought back to its glory by the new owners. Now you can view their collection; contemplate possible purchases; eat in a wonderful restaurant in the basement; or have a quiet coffee on the terrace which overlooks the town. Its website [has a virtual gallery](#) which allows you to see for yourself. It was a visit to the Phillipopolis Gallery in Plovdiv in May 2008 which really activated my painting passion. The atmosphere and reception was so great that, without at that stage knowing anything at that stage about Bulgarian painting, I bought a small Zhekov; a large Mechkuevska and two contemporaries. So, be warned!

### **Atanas Krastev House**

The [Atanas Krastev house](#) should be visited - where local painter and conservationist *Atanas Krastev* lived until his death in 2003. His constant striving to keep the old buildings (at a time in the 1960s when tradition was viewed with some hostility) and to have them as active centres of cultural activity earned him the title of *Mayor of Old Plovdiv* - and he deserves wider recognition. The cosy, well-furnished house is strewn with personal mementoes, and the terrace offers superb views. His self-portraits and personal collection of (mostly) abstract 20th-century Bulgarian paintings are displayed. The garden also houses exhibits.

### **Razgrad - The Art Gallery**

the modern green building beside the central Mosque

tel.: +359 84 27 067                      +359 84 27 067                      , 29 618

Exposition: a standing exhibition and temporary thematic exhibitions of paintings, prints and sculptures.

Open: 9 - 12 a.m., 3- 7 p.m.

Closed: Saturdays and Sundays

Housed in a superb, modernised and specially-designed building (with EC funding) in the heart of the town right next to the well-kept mosque, it has an enthusiastic Director, Todor Todorov, who personally showed us round the collection on display. This included about 6 Danail Dechevs, a Tanev, a Boris Denev, several Vladimir Dimitrovs and two painters until then unknown to me - Maxim Tsankov (1877-1965) and Kosta Petrov (1894-1973).

Razgrad's permanent exhibition also includes an excellent graphics collection.

The gallery's catalogue is the best I have seen - with coloured reproductions and English as well as Bulgarian notes on the paintings and painters. It also has a website - although still, clearly, in the process of construction.

The Razgrad Gallery is the only one I have seen which has used Regional Funds to make such a major refurbishment - which shows both official initiative and political support.

Razgrad's gallery must go to the top of my unofficial list of best housed, managed and documented regional galleries in Bulgaria - with Stara Zagora a close second. Russe is the worst. Of course, these are not necessarily the best criteria - for example the poorly-housed Targovishte Gallery was abuzz with a group of

school-kids - and the unheated Skitnik gallery in Sliven sponsors an annual Plein Air summer school. Such local access and use should clearly be the core of the mission of any art gallery.

I find these differences an interesting example of the effects and importance of local government - although the proper maintenance of older paintings which are part of a country's national patrimony has national significance. The lack of heating which threatens so many paintings in Bulgaria's regional art galleries is a disgrace - but perhaps it is too easy to put this down to lack of municipal funding. I found it curious that one of the galleries I visited had 7 staff. Of course I never like to recommend job-shedding but, in this case, perhaps lack of heating simply shows a poor sense of budgetary priorities!

## Russe Art Gallery

Somewhere in the centre!

The gallery is in a scandalous state for such a large city - with no heating and the paintings in one of the three rooms lying propped on the floor with no means of identification. Some superb works from Vladimir Dmitrov-Maistera, Atanas Mihov, Benchko Obreshkov and Nenko Balkanski - all, however, at risk from the disgraceful conditions. What was even more galling was that an expensive book was on offer - at 25 euros - celebrating 75 years of the gallery. It must have cost 5,000 euros to produce - money which would have been much better spent to keep the paintings in a safer condition.

I can understand the galleries of smaller municipalities being in poor conditions - but there is absolutely no excuse for this neglect for a city such as Russe. Places like *Razgrad* and *Kazanlak* - with one fifth of the population - clearly do so much better! Pity the poor young warden who sat wrapped up and freezing in his cubicle as I happily snapped the choicer exhibits. He smiled sadly when I asked if there was a feedback book available for me to make my comments! At the very least, the city authorities should relocate the paintings to a smaller place which is easier to heat! And it doesn't take much money to produce a CD of the gallery collection.

## Shoumen - The Elena Karamihailova Art Gallery

81 Tsar Ivan Alexander St

tel.: +359 54 42 126                      +359 54 42 126

Exposition: paintings, prints and sculptures

Highlights: works by Elena Karamihailova, Alexander Moutafov, Hristo Kazandzhiev, Ilia Petrov, Vasil Stoilov, Dechko Ouzounov, Nikola Mihailov.

Open: 9 - 12 a.m., 2- 6 p.m.

Closed: Saturdays and Sundays

The town of Shumen (80 kms from Varna and the Black Sea) is a bit unprepossessing as you drive in - with decaying 1950s residential blocks. But its centre is a pleasant surprise, with one the largest pedestrian areas I have ever seen - with trees, a theatre, statues and a mountain range behind. Its upper side is graced with a series of old, large official buildings - of which a mock Italian palace (the police station) is perhaps the most interesting.

Younger people we asked about the location of The *Elena Karamihaylova Gallery* clearly had never visited the place - but two elderly ladies pointed us in the right direction. The gallery was initially a disappointment - since the second floor containing the permanent collection was closed for reconstruction. But conversations with the staff must have conveyed our love of Bulgarian painting and the Director graciously presented us with an attractive pack containing 20 postcards of the paintings, a CD and a small booklet giving the history of the collection and short notes on the artists.

When, however, I mentioned the name Alexander Moutafov (who was apparently born in Shumen), it was literally the key to open an Aladdin's Cave.

Valentina Velikova, the paintings expert, took us to the archives where the collection (of 1,300 items) is stored and filed. And she was kind enough to find and pull out for our inspection various portraits by Elena Karamihaylova and paintings by Nikola Tanev, Alexander Moutafov and Stanio Stamatov. Marvellous to have a chance to handle such work. And great that a small gallery should have developed such a nice pack. They are rare amongst Regional galleries in having a CD. It is so simple, cheap to create - and so necessary given the large numbers of paintings which are doomed to spend their life in basement archives!

## Silistra Art Gallery

Svoboda Sq

tel.: +359 86 26 838                      +359 86 26 838                      , 22 395

Exposition: paintings, prints, sculptures

Highlights: works by Zlatyu Boyadzhiev, Danail Dechev, Stoyan Venev, Tsanko Lavrenov, Vasil Stoilov, Bencho Obreshkov, Nenko Balkanski.

Open: 8 - 12 a.m., 2- 6 p.m.

Closed: Saturdays and Sundays

## Sliven

The city's "Dimitar Dobrevich" gallery has three permanent expositions:

Contemporary Bulgarian art - **gallery hall "Sirak Skitnik"**,  
2 "Tzar Simeon" Blvd., tel. +359 44/ 25342

The Old Sliven - paintings of Dobri Dobrev in the "**Mirkovich**" house,  
10 "Mirkovich" Str., tel. +359 44/ 22796

Christian Art - **Christian Art**,  
13 Tzar Osvoboditel Blvd., tel. +359 44/ 22083

Art Gallery "Dimitar Dobrevich" works everyday from Monday to Friday,  
from 09.00-12.00 and 13.30-17.00.

Non working days: Saturday and Sunday.

The home of Dobri Dobrev. And the town has done Dobrev proud - with some 50 of his paintings on permanent display in a superb National Revival house - Mirkovitch House. I was taken to the Gallery by one of the curators of the nearby *Sirak Stitnik Gallery* which is the town's main gallery who had been kind enough to show me round it. It has a great collection - not only the country's greats such as Tanev, Abadjiev and Boris Denev but a special exhibition of the graphics of a new painter for me - Kozucharov, Nikola (1892-1971). He's famous apparently for his mythological and historical paintings but was also a war artist - covering the Balkan War and First World Wars - and some of these sketches were on display. Unfortunately, there was no heating in the place - like the Russe and Targovishte galleries

## Smolyian

Dicho Petrov 7

tel: 0301 62 328

open; 09:00-12:00 & 13:30-17:00 Tue-Sun

A great collection - well worth the trip. And in a Rhodope town in a superb location.

Amongst other local artists, I was introduced to the work of Anastas Staikov by a Slovak woman who guided us around and introduced us to the Director.

What struck me was what they were achieving against the odds - they had insufficient money for proper maintenance - let alone advertise the gallery and its great paintings.

## Stara Zagora Art Gallery

Address: Stara Zagora, 27 Ruski Blvd.

Working time: tue-sat 10:00-18:00

Phone: 042 62 28 43

Phone: 042 62 23 80

The town has a superb location with the Balkan mountains as a majestic backcloth. It was completely destroyed by the Turks in 1877 for welcoming the Russian army of General Gurko and was subsequently rebuilt on a strict grid-plan with leafy Boulevards.

I therefore had no problems finding the Art gallery which is a most impressive one - well maintained and offering, for 1 euro, 3 separate exhibitions.

The permanent exhibition displays some of the works of the many painters who have been born and worked there - eg Anton Mitov, Mario Zhekov and Atanas Mihov. Paintings by Nikola Tanev, Ivan Penkov and Moutafov were also on display.

The Gallery also offered a collection of women's portraits and, finally, a display of woodcuts and graphics in a temperature controlled room.

The exhibits were so enthralling I spent almost two hours in total there - with a return visit after the lunchbreak. Many new names - eg Vasil Marinov and a great portraitist Elizabeth Konsulova-Vazova (1881-1965)

## Targovishte - The Nikola Marinov Art Gallery

Park "Borovo Oko"

tel.: [+359 601 27 760](tel:+35960127760) [+359 601 27 760](tel:+35960127760)

Exposition: paintings, prints, sculpture

Highlights: a collection of water colours by Nikola Marinov

Open: 8 - 12 a.m., 2- 6 p.m.

Closed: Saturdays and Sundays

The gallery has a rather remote location (at least for present wintry conditions) in a park on the town's periphery next to a lake which must be glorious in summer (and also to the football stadium). From the outside its cavernous size held some promise - but this was quickly dashed by the iciness of the air as we stepped inside. There was no heating (and loud leaks from the roofs) for the Gallery's 2 huge rooms - which held little of interest. One Neron and one Svetlin Russe which must be fast deteriorating in such conditions. No sign of the Marinov water colours which I learned about later!



## Varna - Georgi Velchev Art Museum

8 R. Dimitriev St

tel.: [+359 52 238 011](tel:+35952238011) [+359 52 238 011](tel:+35952238011)

Exposition: paintings and drawings by one of the best masters of sea scapes in Bulgaria. Landscapes from France, Germany and Bulgaria, portraits and self-portraits by Georgi Velchev (1891-1955).

Open: summer 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.;

winter 13 p.m. - 5 p.m.

Closed: summer- Mondays,

winter- Saturdays and Sundays

## Varna - Boris Georgiev Gallery

1 L. Karavelov St

tel.: [+359 52 243 123](tel:+35952243123) [+359 52 243 123](tel:+35952243123) , 243 141

tel./fax: +359 52 243 088

Exposition: on 1600 square metres: West European art of the 17th century, Bulgarian art from the beginning of the century, contemporary Bulgarian art.

Highlights: works of art of national importance: Vladimir Dimitrov- the Master - "A young girl with grapes", "Prayer"; Zlatyu Boyadzhiev- "Rest in the fields", 1943, "Opening mines Pernik"; [paintings by Ivan Markvichka](#), [St. Ivanov](#), [Vasil Stoilov](#), [Tsanko Lavrenov](#), Dechko Ouzounov, Stoyan Venev; sculptures by Kiril Shivarov,; collection of west European art.

Open: 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.

Closed: Mondays

## Veliko Tarnovo - Boris Denev Art Gallery

"Park Asenevtsi"

(0)62-638-961: Director

(0)62-638-951: Curator

(0)62-638-941: Ticket window

opening hours

10.00- 18.00

closed; Mondays

The walk across a footbridge over the River Yantra offers the perspective of the ancient town given by [the painting I posted last Tuesday](#)

The Gallery was originally built in the 1970s as an Art School but actually opened as a police station! Very symbolic! It was eventually opened as an ArtGallery in the mid 1980s.

The Director showed me round a great collection - 2 Tanevs on display and a room and a corridor devoted entirely to Boris Denev's work - the room with about 7 large oil paintings of the town and the corridor with aquarelles mainly of Italian scenes.

For this post, I have selected this moving portrayal of his mother.



.....

Note also that several villages eg **Berkovitsa** in Vidin Region and **Izvorovo** village in Targovishte Region apparently have galleries - the first focussing on the work of Dragonov, the second on Kutzkarov

## **Annex 2; Private galleries in Sofia which concentrate on “realistic” Bulgarian painters of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century**

### **Antique Shop and Gallery**

this gallery has three rooms with an interesting selection of older paintings – some from outside Bulgaria.

### **Antique Shop and Gallery**

34 Solunska St

- looks a bit kitsch from outside with a dummy in soldier uniform but they have some worthwhile stuff inside. The son speaks English.

### **Baltoff**

37 Ezrah Yosiff St

[www.antiques.bg](http://www.antiques.bg)

- another antique shop with an interesting selection of older paintings and one of my recent discoveries (although the gallery has been next to the Lidl supermarket at the area with the old Mosque for more than 6 years). The owner edited the catalogue for the exhibition of Rusi Ganchev paintings which was the first I saw at the National Gallery in 2007.

### **Barnev and Doychev Art**

15 San Stefano St

- charming small gallery in the University area – on the doctors' square. More than meets the eye since they have a lot of paintings in piles against the wall. They speak English.

### **Bulgari**

69 Bvd Dondukov

[www.gallery.bulgary.bg](http://www.gallery.bulgary.bg)

- part of a larger complex which includes a lovely restaurant (on the top floor you can dine in real privacy amongst some of the paintings). Sadly the gallery has now closed (late 2014) although I understand that paintings can still be accessed from the restaurant

## **Classica**

32, Liuben Karavelov St  
0896 854210

- a charming old converted flat near the crossroads of Ignatiev and Vessil Levski. A fairly small selection on display - although you can view on their computer other paintings they can bring for you. But they do quote rather high prices.

## **Galleria-Antiques**

38 Tsar Assen St  
0887 600 194

- Alexander Aleksiev's wonderful tiny aladdin's cave where I have found some lovely old stuff...

## **Impression Art**

Valeri Filipov  
11 Vasil Levsky Bvd  
0898 566 667

- Valeri has recently moved to this more up-market (and contemporary art) gallery but still has a stock of the older works he displayed in his previous gallery (Valmar). He has great sources - and is worth cultivating. He speaks English.

## **Inter Nos**

58b Vassil Levski Boulevard  
[www.internos-galleryantiques.com](http://www.internos-galleryantiques.com)

- this atmospheric gallery with older Bulgarian paintings has now sadly been sold on to people who seem now to have mainly kitsch. It's actually on the side street

## **Kristar Gallery**

100, Rakovski St  
0896 621113

- well established gallery with a small but select collection. The lady speaks English.

## **Loran Gallery**

Laven Petrov  
16 Oborishte St86  
0888 920 7  
[www.galleryloran.com](http://www.galleryloran.com)

- a small but select gallery which mounts exhibitions every couple of months - focusing on Bulgarian painters from the last century. Their website has a good collection of paintings - a nice feature

being the portraits of the 100 or so artists in the list. The gallery occasionally produce special books on artists. The young ladies have excellent English.

## **Neron**

Rumen Manov  
Tsar Samuel 12  
0887 43 10 76

- at corner with Rilski St. A man with a passion. Has the best collection of the older painters with paintings piled all around the small space and downstairs basement. His appreciation of Bulgarian history shown in the time and care he has devoted to two large books, one on his hometown, Kyustendil, the other a 700 page book consisting of his photographic collection of old Bulgaria. We use Russian to converse...

## **Rakovski Gallery**

11, Kan Khrum St  
0887 989977

- some interesting stuff but a bit too eager to do a sale for my liking.

## **Stari Maisteri Gallery**

13, Parehevich St

- very small antique shop with a few paintings.

## **Tzennosti (Values) Gallery**

Buzludja St 17 (Iulin Planina)  
02.953 1315

<http://www.values-gallery.com>

- a well-established (and apparently prestigious) gallery focussing on Bulgaria's old masters - hidden away in a charming and old part of Sofia between Prague Bvd and Bvds Makedonia/Totleben. It has the richest collection (in more senses than one) of all the galleries I have visited here.

There were so many painters of whom I hadn't heard. Some of the paintings seem to have been there for several years (eg some Vladimir Dmitrov's at 20,000 euros in the 2009 Antiques Price Guide) - which makes one wonder about their business model. Clearly they cater for bigger spenders than me! Probably an institutional market ie the banks!

## **Victoria Gallery**

Yuri Gagarin 22a  
0888 572 172 (Pavlina)

<http://www.gallery-victoria.com/catalog.asp>



- THE place to go for this sort of painting! Pavlina is very knowledgeable! Their website is the most comprehensive for this older, more classic sort of Bulgarian painting. And, for each of their (quarterly) auctions, they produce a great little Catalogue - free of charge.  
The auctions - generally at the Sheraton Hotel - are a great experience.

## **Vida Gallery**

Proprieter; Marina Marinova

16 Iskar St (although entrance is round the corner on Budapest St!)

tel 0888 69 27 95

<http://www.vida-gallery.com/artists>

- I found this modern gallery only recently since it's just off the normal tourist trail although the area, for me, is Sofia's most interesting, adjacent to the mosque and the source of thermal water which attracts Sofia's citizens with their empty 5 litre bottles

The gallery has a good collection of Bulgarian painters ... and also western paintings and lithographs (Pascin, Steinlen, Vlaminck, Toulouse Lautrec) but they also have some very interesting pieces of african and asian art

## **Annex 3: Contemporary Art Galleries**

Although my main interest is the realist painting from the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, I do have more than 20 paintings by contemporary artists - Milcho Kostadinov, Yuliana Sotirova and Angela Minkova were three of my early favourites. And I have learned so much (and spent many happy hours) in two galleries in central Sofia in particular which focus on contemporary art, ceramics and sculpture - namely -

### **KONUS Gallery**

32, Khan Asparuh St

proprietor - Yassen Gollev (this is one of his surrealist paintings)

0898 537673

[www.konusgallery.net](http://www.konusgallery.net)

### **ASTRY Gallery**

34, Tsar Samuil St

proprietor - Vihra Pesheva

02 986 3780

0885 230717

[www.strygallery.com](http://www.strygallery.com)

Every two months or so, Vihra organises a special exhibition of a contemporary artist - duly opened with a delightful Vernissaj

Let me also mention Sofia's only gallery dealing with aquarelles - a new arrival which has already established a niche by virtue of its frequent exhibitions, reasonable prices and wine bar!

### **ABSINTHE Gallery**

Proprietor - Daiana Staikova

Tsar Samuil St 47

+359 887 608 900

## Annex 4: My Library

One of my hobbies is to trawl Sofia's galleries and bookshops – particularly the second-hand ones. As a result I have accumulated a little library (mostly in the Bulgarian language) of detailed studies of Bulgarian artists.

I know it may be a bit eccentric to list them – but it is my only real way of keeping track of them.....they include –

- *Art of Bulgarian Woodcarvings*, Dimiyt Drumov and Asen Vasilev (1955)
- *Alexander Zhendov* (1959); savage political satire
- *The Strushl Caricature Almanac* (1971) – a wonderful collection of classic Bulgaria cartoons
- *70 Years of the Sofia Art Academy 1896-1966* (1972) – great collection of class photos as well as reproductions
- *The Bulgarian National Liberal Movement in the Fine Arts*; Ivan Marazov (Sofia 1979)
- *Ilyia Beshkov*, Maria Obcharova (1982) – my favourite of about 4 books I have on the great artist and humourist. This one is 355 pages
- *Ilyia Beshkov* (1983) – 500 pages of comprehensive coverage of most items with extensive text (ed by Bogomil Rainov) which makes me regret not being able to read Bulgarian – although I have found a 1957 copy of a German edition – and also have an old copy of his autobiography
- *Marco Behar* (Bulgarian Publishing House 1987) – 200 pages of great (black and white) repros and substantial text – by Ivan Mazarov
- *Dmitir Gydjeeennnov*
- *Kiril Tsonev* (1996) – monolingual booklet about a significant Bulgarian modernist
- *Ivan Milev 1897-1997* (1997) 168 pp monolingual
- *Alexander Bozhinov* edited by Ruza Marinska (National Gallery 1999) – most beautiful and detailed 125 page treatment with an English intro and some annotations
- *Boris Angeloushev* – by Atanas Stoikov (2003) – a very extensive 450 page coverage with a lot of text and what looks an almost comprehensive treatment of his works. I also have a 1961 edition
- *Marin Ustagenov* (2005) – good selections and a lot of (Bulgarian) text
- *Georgi Popov John* (2006) – bilingual guide to an interesting fairly neglected –Bulgarian painter
- *Russi Ganchev* (National Gallery 2007) – about 100 reproductions and introductory (Bulgarian) text
- *Sekul Krumov Sculture* – anniversary album (2008); nice little 100 page bilingual edition
- *Bencho Obreshkov* (2009) – monolingual guide
- *Professor Stefan Dmitrov – Bulgaria's premier ceramicist* (Prof Ivanova 2008) Lovely colour reproductions and black and white group photos from early 20<sup>th</sup> century
- *Konstantin Shterkelov* (2009) – delightful little Varna catalogue, but monolingual
- *Life-Portayal by K Shturkelov* (2013) – a substantial 200 page paperback I unearthed in the fantastic Ileana bookshop near the Russian Church
- *Marko Monev* – a monolingual guide to a Russe painter (2009)
- *Nikola Tanev 1890-1962* (National Gallery 2010) – two books, one (2000) by the famous art critic Ruzha Marinska, the other (2010) produced by the National Gallery to go with the special exhibition they held then for Tanev.
- *Vaska Popova-Balaverwa* (Context 2010) – a wonderful (bilingual) 120-page celebration of her life edited by her son. Complete with old photographs and reproductions of her many

paintings of artistic and literary figures, it gives a wonderful sense of artistic life in Sofia in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

- *Slavka Deneva* (Support for Art in Bulgaria Foundation 2010) - great (bilingual) study of the work of Boris Denev's daughter
- *Pencho Balkanski Photography* - in the trail of his Vienna 1936 Exhibition (National Gallery (2010); a wonderful collection of an artist's photos from the 1930s
- *Nikolai Boiadjiev* (Sofia City Gallery 2011)
- *Nikola Petrov* (Sofia City Gallery 2011) - attractive bilingual booklet
- *Vladimir Dmitrov-Maistora - the flower and the universe* (National Gallery 2012) - wonderful 200 page bilingual publication!
- *Vladimir Dmitrov-Maistora*; 42 pages (2012)
- *Ivan Nenov* (City Gallery 2012) - a good bilingual booklet
- *Georgi Bozhilov-Slona - Portraits of the Spirit* (Ars MMM 2012) a substantial 250 page bilingual text
- *Boris Denev* (2013) - a superb (bilingual) 200 page collection of text and full-page reproductions of one of Bulgaria's best artists. A nice feature is the black and white photos of him in his studio and with friends (such as Nikola Tanev)
- *Jules Pascin* (City Gallery 2013) - typically professional and extensive treatment by the City Gallery staff. Bilingual
- *The Teacher; retrospective exhibition of Mihail Krastev* - excellent small bilingual catalogue to an inspiring but modest teacher (City Gallery 2013). A model of what a catalogue should be
- *Xristo Kavarnaliev 1894-1951*; by Velrie Posharov (Biblioteka Klassika 2014) beautiful but monolingual 170 page book
- *Nikolay Raynov* (National Galley 2014); beautiful - and bilingual 80 page text
- *Boris Angelushev ; drawings and illustraions from the Boris Angelushev Foundation* (National Gallery 2014) 88 pages

Many are out of print. Between the 1960s and 1980s a lot of short monographs were produced on Bulgarian artists and I have editions about Stoian Venev, Jaroslav Veshin, Tanko Lavrenov, Ivan Lazarov, the great sculptor, the aquarellist Pavel Vlkev and Ivan Ivanov - as well as the monumental sculptors - Ivan Funev, Marko Markov and Nikolai Shhmirgela

In 2008 I found (in a Gallery) a nice little booklet which listed all antique dealers and gallerists in the whole of Bulgaria (containing about 30 coloured reproductions of paintings of the mid 20th century) but later editions are no longer available.

My inquiries at the large second-hand bookshop in the underground passage in front of Sofia University threw up only a large 1982 book purporting to be about modern Bulgarian painting - which, however, had no Mario Zhekovs and only 2 Nikola Tanevs. A revealing historical insight into socialist selectivity! But not, for me, worth the 100 euros they were asking. In the city's various antique shops, it is generally possible to find catalogues of individual painters - thus I acquired one on one of Bulgaria's classic artists - Nikolai Boiadjiev.

Neither the bookshop next door nor the cubicle on the left as you enter the School of Fine Arts could offer me a general book on the period. The Fine Arts shop had nice booklets on specific artists I didn't then know about - such as Marko Monev, Slavka Deneva and Kiril Tsonev.

The *Sofia City Gallery* used to have a few residual copies of a marvellous large book which is a black and white catalogue of all the Bulgarian paintings in their possession. The City Galleries of Dobrich and Kyustendil also have such a Catalogue. The Sofia gallery also occasionally prints booklets on their temporary exhibitions - a recent wonderful example being a large book about the painters who were active in the Association of New Artists in the 1930s.

Not so wonderful (but with obvious political significance) was their bilingual book for the exhibition covering the "opening up" of the art world just before 1989 - *Art for Change 1985-2015*

The Stara Zagora gallery has a beautiful book with reproductions from the famous painters who came from that city.

One dealer was able to give me copies of three excellent booklets which were produced (in 1985!) by *Samokov Gallery* (alas no more) on Vasil Sachariev, Georg Velstoiniev and Xristo Kriskaretz. Alexander Aleksiev's tiny antique shop at 38 Tsar Assen St is one of the few where you might be able to pick up the odd copy of these sorts of catalogues - another is just off Vasil Levsky Bvd at the corner with the University



## About the author

Ronald Young lived the first 48 years of his life in the West of Scotland - 22 of them as an aspiring academic and innovative politician in local, then Regional, Government.

The last 24 years have been spent as a consultant in central Europe and central Asia - generally leading small teams in institutional development or training projects.

He first came to live in Bulgaria in the summer of 2007 - and has since then divided his time between a flat in Sofia, a flat in Bucharest and a house in the Carpathian mountains.

In 2008 he started a website which contains the major papers he has written over the years about his attempts to reform various public organisations in the various roles he has had - politician; academic/trainer; consultant.

*"Most of the writing in my field is done by academics - and gives little help to individuals who are struggling to survive in or change public bureaucracies. Or else it is propaganda drafted by consultants and officials trying to talk up their reforms. And most of it covers work at a national level - whereas most of the worthwhile effort is at a more local level.*

*The restless search for the new dishonours the work we have done in the past. As Zeldin once said - "To have a new vision of the future it is first necessary to have new vision of the past"*

In 2009 he started a blog - called [Balkan and Carpathian Musings](#) - to try to make sense of the organisational endeavours he has been involved in - to see if there are any lessons which can be passed on. To restore a bit of institutional memory and social history - particularly in the endeavour of what used to be known as "social justice".

*"My generation believed that political activity could improve things - that belief is now dead and that cynicism threatens civilisation. I also read a lot and wanted to pass on the results of this to those who have neither the time nor inclination - as well as my love of painting, particularly the realist 20th century schools of Bulgaria and Belgium".*

He now has a new website - [Mapping the Common Ground](#) - which is a library for articles and books he considers useful for those who - like Brecht - feel that "So ist die Welt - und muss nicht so sein"!

*I've always had great difficulty answering the simple question "What do you do?" "Student" was easy but, after graduation, I had a quick succession of jobs in what could be called generally the "planning" field - and "planner" is as vague a term as "manager" and enjoyed a rather limited vogue. In 1968 I joined a polytechnic and was also elected to a town council - so "lecturer" was as good a description as what I did as any. Using my voice was what I was paid for - whether to transmit information or opinions. I read widely - so "reader" was also a pertinent word. I became heavily involved in community development - managing to straddle the worlds of community action and political bureaucracy (for 20 years I was the Secretary of ruling Labour groups in municipal and regional Councils and also a sponsor of community action) and figured in a book about "reticulists" (networkers) - but imagine putting that word in a passport application!*

*For a few years I was Director of a so-called "Research Unit" which was more like a Think Tank in its proselytising workshops and publications celebrating the new rationalism of corporate management and community development.*

*At age 43 my default activity became full-time (regional) politics - with a leader role but of a rather maverick nature who never aspired to the top job but was content to be at the interstices of bureaucracy, politics and academia. I remember my reception at an OECD function in central Sweden as someone with a proclivity to challenge.*

*All this paved the way for the "consultancy" which I have apparently practised for the past 20 years in Central Europe and Central Asia. But "consultant" is not only a vague but a (rightly) increasingly insulting term - so I was tempted for a period to enter the word "writer" on my Visa application forms since this was as good a description of what I actually did as any. At one stage indeed, my despairing Secretary in the Region had actually given me the nickname "Paperback writer". Except that this was seen by many border guards in central Asia as a threatening activity! Robert Reich's "symbolic analyst" briefly tempted - but was perhaps too close to the term "spy"!*

*When I did the [Belbin test on team roles](#) to which I was subjecting my teams, I had expected to come out as a leader - but was not altogether surprised to discover that my stronger role was a "resource person" - someone who surfed information and knowledge widely and shared it. What some people saw as the utopian streak in my writing gave me the idea of using the term "poet" at the airport guiches - but I have a poor memory for verse.*

*This morning, as I looked around at the various artefacts in the house, a new label came to me - "collector"! I collect beautiful objects - not only books and paintings but pottery, pens, pencils, laquered cases, miniatures, carpets, Uzbek wall-hangings, Kyrgyz and Iranian table coverings, glassware, terrace cotta figurines, plates, Chinese screens, wooden carvings et al. Of very little - except sentimental - value I hasten to add! But, of course, I have these things simply because I have been an "explorer" - first of ideas (desperately searching for the holy grail) and then of countries - in the 1980s Western Europe, the 1990s central Europe - finally central Asia and beyond.*

*Some 25 years ago, when I was going through some difficult times, my sister-in-law tried to help me by encouraging me to explore the various roles I had - father, son, husband, politician, writer, activist etc. I didn't understand what she was driving at. Now I do! Lecturer, reticulist, politician, maverick, leader, writer, explorer, consultant, resource person, collector - I have indeed played all these roles (and more too intimate for this blog!). Makes me wonder what tombstone I should have carved for myself in the marvellous [Sapanta cemetery in Maramures](#) where people are remembered humourously in verse and pictures for their work or way they died!!*

And it was TS Eliot who wrote that

*old men ought to be explorers*

## LIST OF Author's PUBLICATIONS

[Mapping Romania - notes on an unfinished journey](#)

[Introducing the Bulgarian Realists - how to get to know the Bulgarians through their paintings](#)

[The Search for the Holy Grail - some reflections on 40 years of trying to make government and its systems work for people](#)

[Just Words](#) - a glossary and bibliography for the fight against the pretensions and perversities of power

[A Draft Guide for the Perplexed;](#)

[The Long Game - not the log-frame;](#)

[Administrative Reform with Chinese Characteristics](#)

[Training that works! How do we build training systems which actually improve the performance of state bodies?](#) - this paper extracts some lessons from the work I've done in the last decade - particularly in Kyrgyzstan and Bulgaria. Even altho I say it myself - it is one of the best papers on the subject

[Building Municipal Capacity](#) - an interesting account of an intellectual journey

[Building Local Government in a Hostile Climate](#)

[Roadmap for Local Government in Kyrgyzstan](#) - this is a long doc (117 pages. I enjoyed pulling out this metaphor - and developing using (in workshops) the diagram at pages 76-77

[Annotated Bibliography for change agents](#) - For quite a few years I had the habit of keeping notes the books I was reading. Perhaps they will be useful to others?

[Overview of PAR in transition countries](#) - This is the paper I drafted for the European Agency for Reconstruction after the staff retreat the EAR Director invited me to speak at in June 2006 in Skopje, Macedonia. The best papers are always written after the event!

[Learning from Experience - a Bulgarian](#) project

[Case Study in Organisational Development and Political Amnesia](#)

[In Transit - Part One](#) - The first section of the book I wrote a decade ago for young Central European reformers. I find it stands up pretty well to the test of time

[Transfer of Functions - European experiences 1970-2000](#) I learned a lot as I drafted this paper for my Uzbek colleagues. I haven't seen this sort of typology before.