

CKI Trip in Saint Petersburg.

Last June 2014, our C.K.I. took part in a private but nevertheless very important event: **the visit to the Academy of Baron von Stieglitz, State School of Art and Design in Saint Petersburg**, where Gertrud has been keeping a strong and friendly relationship with its teachers and directors.

It was an express desire of our founder, Gertrud Rittmann-Fischer, to partake in this important meeting with an artistic, cultural, humanitarian and most importantly friendly character of proximity between people who live so far from each other. This has always been the main purpose and mission of our founder in her long years of activity: **to fill the gaps between different peoples with solid relationships, using art as a bridge to let the artists get in contact first of all at a personal level.**

An ambitious project that up to now managed to give extraordinary fruits and **that Gertrud wanted to renew** in Saint Petersburg, one of the greatest capitals of art in the world. Fearing that these links may weaken because of her reduced presence, mainly due to her age (92 years) and to her succession as president of the association, she really wished this meeting.

In Saint Petersburg, delegations of CKI artists from many countries had the occasion to meet the Russian colleagues of the Academy of Baron von Stieglitz and, in particular, the President Prof. Alexei Talaschuk, Vassili Kosarev former director of the Museum, who was kind to work as our translator. At the event, the new director and many other professors, such as Nikolai Yashmanov, Svetlana Ponomarenko, Yuri Sarkiskyan, and renowned enamel artists such as Larisa Solomnikova, Ivan Dyakov, Anna Vekler and Anvar Bagautdinov. It must be said, anyway, that the large majority of our permanence in Russia was dedicated to the "discovery" of Saint Petersburg, an extraordinary city that might be defined as a real **open-air museum**.

Once known in the past as Petrograd (1914-1924) and Leningrad (1924-1991), Saint Petersburg was founded in 1703 and was the capital of Russia for 186 uninterrupted years and, thanks to her buildings (built for the most part by Italian architects) and for the system of channels linked to the Neva, is often nicknamed **the Northern Venice**.

The city is born, in fact, as a window on Europe to improve the commercial contacts with the West. Peter the Great drained the area that was formerly a swamp in a Swedish territory, and sacrificed huge resources to built his new capital, named after his patron saint, St. Peter the apostle. The Russian name "Sankt Petersburg" is of Dutch origin: Sankt Piter Burkh. The name was chosen because the tsar had lived and studied in the Netherlands during his youth.

The Academy of Baron von Stieglitz

Our main purpose for the trip to Saint Petersburg was our meeting with the friends and colleagues of the State Academy of Art and Design "Baron von Stieglitz", which took place on the last day of our permanence in Russia. President Alexei Talaschuk welcomed us on occasion of his 70th birthday and was a good chance to exchange some greetings and to visit the Academy Museum.



The new director of the Academy opens the doors of the Museum... just for us, on Sunday.

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Façade of the Academy "Baron von Stieglitz".



Hall and galleries of the Museum of Applied Arts "Baron von Stieglitz".



Statue of Baron Alexander von Stieglitz, pleased to observe from above in the hall.



Professor Talaschuk with a book received as a present – Gertrud pronounces her discourse. Below, prof. Talaschuk listens to the questions of the guests, helped by translator prof. Kosarev.



Intervention of the Italian delegation.



On the left, Ivan Dyakov with prof. Talaschuk. On the right, he bends over Gertrud and looks more moved than her!



Supper with Pres. Alexei Talaschuk – Francesc Vilasis draws and paints using wine and food.



The meeting room with the walls filled with students' essays – Alexei says that in 30 years of friendship and cooperation, he owes much of his results at the Academy to Gertrud Rittmann-Fischer, a living enamel icon!

Some works of the Academy students.

