

The Cyprus Epic in the work of the Russo-Cypriot painter-poet Symeon Volchkov

Address by Dr. Kleitos Ioannides at the presentation of the album to the Library of Cyprus on 10/12/2019

The great French poet who visited Cyprus, Arthur Rimbaud, says in one of his verses: “in a hurry to find the place and the formula” (**pressé de trouver le lieu et la formule**). Symeon Volchkov found the place, and found the formula.



His place, his work, both painterly and poetic, is Russia, the Ukraine, the Black Sea Pontus, and Cyprus. These he sings and these he praises and paints. The formula is the language of paint, of which he is a master, its grammar, its syntax and its orthography. And I am happy that through my relationship and friendship with Lara I met her father, that important creator of an art both important and perfect, as Aristotle would have said.

As everything in this life is sensation, in the film we saw tonight and the longer documentary the other night we were given many sensations of Symeon Volchkov. This word “sensation” was said to me by an atheistic theologian - he was both a theologian and an atheist. Why - I said to him - since you don’t believe in anything, what then is life for you? A sensation... he replied. As time passes, the more I understand what my friend in Germany, Evangelos Constantinou, told me. He was a professor of Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek Grammar in Würzburg. What I mean by this is that man is sensation, but also moment. In one of my poems I say: “Life is short and moments long”. Life is short: eighty, one hundred years. But moments are very long, they can, that is, open the windows to immortality. They may not always stand still, and that is the tragedy of humanity, but they do stand still in some works of art, as Goethe said: “Stop, beautiful moment.” And Symeon Volchkov expressed in his wonderful moments the tragedy suffered by humanity in Cyprus, and his own personal, family tragedy, the loss of his son, and the loss of his wife.

Recording and delivering what was said by Rimbaud, this unique Russo-Cypriot artist, with his wonderful moments, imbued to the depths of his soul with Greek spirit, left us a most significant work. He was faithful to Dostoevsky's saying: "Beauty will save the world". Here is beauty - form, as Aristotle called it. Everything leads to form in this world, because if the word is not made flesh it remains word. What is needed is embodiment, and artists embody the word: poets, painters, sculptors, musicians. This is form made flesh, as Aristotle says, recorded in time.

We are all, unfortunately, creatures of time, with longing for the eternal. Symeon Volchkov had this longing, and so he became an albatross. Albatross - I am reminded of Baudelaire's words: "in the depths of the unknown you will find the new" and Symeon found the new, through the language of painting and of poetry, the other language. In art there is always the other language. All those who do not find the other language, the other sea, (and he showed us many seas and many places, this wonderful *paysagist*), fail to make important and significant art.

And so, my dear Lara, I wish you vivid memories of your father, because the human being is sensation but also memory. These moments you will keep in your soul, as will all of us, to love him by, and to remember the artist who succeeded in stealing something from death.

Dr. Ioannides' speech