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### Synopsis of the movie

#### **Poor Yuri! Бедный Юрий!**

(tbc)

I first saw Yuri Reshkin's name in 2023 on an envelope from the archive of the Swedish-Norwegian artist Kaisa Zetterqvist, who lives alone in a forest near Graddis in Norway. Letters dated from the late 1980s and early 1990s in Russian and English, postcards with views of Leningrad, reproductions of Korovin's paintings, and a newspaper clipping about Reshkin's participation in the opening of an art school for children in the Vega region of Nordland, "Fra Sovjet til Vega," published on July 31, 1990, are all part of the materials related to a visit by a delegation from the province of Nordland to Leningrad in 1989. Kaisa Zetterqvist and her husband, Per Adde (both artists and activists), were participants in that meeting and met Yuri somewhere there.

The first thing Kaisa said when I asked her who Yuri was was, "Poor Yuri!" There was indeed a sense of despair in his letters. In one of them he said that he had started teaching at an art school in Leningrad, but he didn't know how long it would last because it took too much time and effort - and these were "necessary things for an artist." Well, and of course, apparently, one must be a person of a certain disposition to write to Kaisa and Per in Russian, a language they could in no way know. Kaisa found out the content of the message more than twenty years later thanks to me. In it, Yuri thanked the couple for their "wonderful art materials," lamented that he had not heard back from them, and reported on his work in Dagestan ("the trip was not quite successful, but I managed to work"). Yuri also wrote that in Leningrad there are exhibitions of Russian frescoes, Gauguin and Kandinsky and that "the fall was wonderful". He also sent his regards to a certain Stig. Kaisa assumed that Stig was one of the people who opened the art school in Nordland. In a photograph, apparently from the opening of the school, Reshkin stands in an elegant suit (practically a tuxedo) surrounded by plainly dressed villagers.

In Kaisa's studio there were two works by Yuri: a sketch and a painting "Windy Day" - landscapes. It turned out that he had lived at least the entire summer at Kaisa and Per's house in 1991. Many of his paintings, according to the artist, they helped sell to a married couple who were in the art-dealing business. Further his traces were lost, but Kaisa was sure that Reshkin was no longer alive.

The artist, who fascinated me and was unknown even to Google, demanded attention. And, if not for the exhibition that Alexander Zimin, a student of Reshkin, opened in 2018 in St. Petersburg, the investigation that had begun might have been cut short at the most interesting point. "Yuri Reshkin. Alexander Zimin. Dialogue in Time" - the student decided to exhibit with his teacher, who by that time had actually died, in tribute to his memory. From the moment we met, we began searching for people who knew the artist and gathering bits and pieces of information about his life in exile - in Israel, where he moved after his Norwegian success. However, whether it was a "success" or an illusory promise of a beautiful future, which could not materialize and led to tragedy, remains to be seen.

Yuri Arkadyevich Reshkin (02.02.1952 - 02.02.2004) lived with his grandmother in a communal apartment on Socialist Street. Kaisa recalled that he lived with his mother in a "very small apartment", and, apparently, that is why he was "poor". In fact, Yuri's mother died in his early childhood, and his father quickly had another family.

Nevertheless, he was not poor in the direct sense of the word, and at one time he supervised children's art schools in the Leningrad region, thanks to which, apparently, he got acquainted with the delegates from Nordland. We would not like to use the word "nomenclature" here, but the artist had relatives in key positions, which, however, did not help him to become a successful artist.

On old tapes of Zimin we see Reshkin on a walk in the city, on a plein air in winter, visiting friends and colleagues. There is also a video where Reshkin solemnly writes a mock receipt that he borrowed to read books and will definitely pay back. There is a shot where the artist and his girlfriend turn around and wave goodbye. Not everyone from these shots can be contacted now, but Alexander contacted Elena Geitsig, who knew Yuri from the late 1990s already in Israel. They were friends and lived in the same house until his, in Elena's words, "tragic passing". She is now 89 years old. She has Yuri's works in various techniques, and we see how he had to adapt to the realities of emigration. Working as an orderly in a clinic, homelessness, lack of money, lack of demand, treatment for manic depression, and a few paintings quite different from his style, clearly painted for income, contrasting with his bold expressive style - and then a mysterious death on his birthday.

The film we are making is not just a restoration of the biography of the forgotten Yuri Reshkin, who did not leave behind even a thin catalog, but about the fate of the artist as such. Was he a "good bad painter", one of the many thousands of realists who failed to fit into the time and art of the era, or a truly underestimated painter? Contact with his life and, alas, death removes all these questions, and this is not simple sentimentality. It is the artist's fate, his vitality, devotion to his gift and undivided love for painting that gives his entire oeuvre its essence, even if there are no more than a dozen disparate works left of his legacy. We look at Reshkin's life as a path to the possible, albeit unrealized. And this path inspires and humbles us.