



THE MUSEUM OF  
RUSSIAN ART

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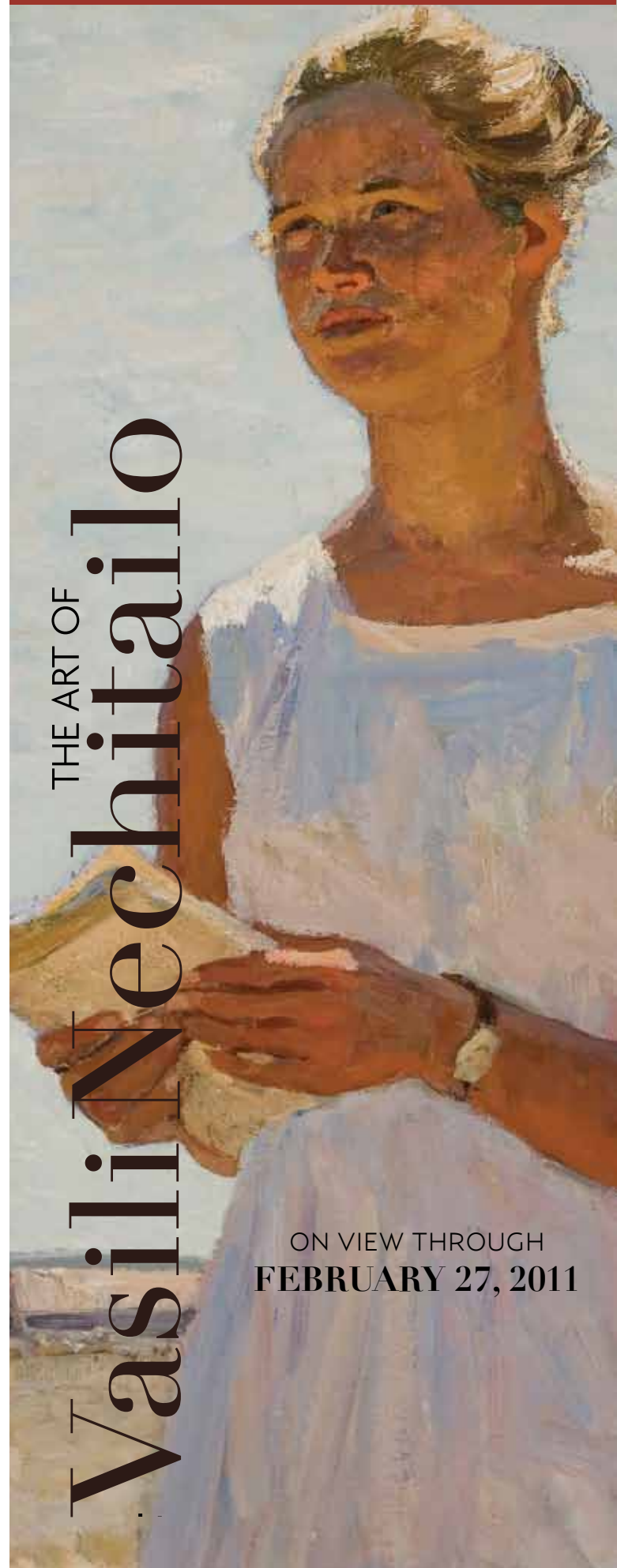
COVER IMAGE:  
*Lidya*, 1963  
Oil on Canvas

*Pereslavl-Zaleski*, 1962  
Oil on Board

*Chekhov Bay*, 1972  
Oil on Canvas

*Girlfriends, Sketch for a Painting*, 1954  
Oil on Board

Discovering 20th Century Russian Masters



THE ART OF  
**Vasilii Nechitailo**

ON VIEW THROUGH  
**FEBRUARY 27, 2011**



## NECHITAILO'S PLACES: MOUNTAIN, SEA AND STEPPE

Vasili Nechitailo's artistic achievements place him among the foremost masters of 20th century Russian art. The beauty and harmony of his expert color solutions are revealed in the fifty-six works on display in this exhibition. Nechitailo excelled in many genres, but he found his chief inspiration in the portrayal of the collective farms of his beloved homeland, the southern Russian steppe.

People's Artist of Soviet Russia, Vasili Nechitailo (1915-1980) was born into a poor peasant family in the Rostov-on-the-Don region in southern Russia shortly before the Socialist Revolution. Vasili's father participated in guerilla warfare on the side of the Red Army during the Civil War and later helped organize a collective farm in his native village. Awed by his father's revolutionary adventure, Vasili remained devoted to Soviet ideals throughout his life. The artist reminisces,

“At home, the revolutionary conflict was stark and irreconcilable: the rich counter-revolutionary White Cossacks against the destitute peasants who joined the Red guerilla forces and fought to the last drop of blood, like characters in Sholokhov's novels. In his *Virgin Soil Uplifted*, Mikhail Sholokhov describes the beginning of collective farms along the Don River, and I can deeply relate to his stories.”

Vasili was too young to participate in the Revolution, but Russia's turbulent history had other ordeals in store for him.

A soldier in WWII, he experienced the bitterness of retreat during the first catastrophic months of the war as the German army rapidly advanced into Soviet territory. When Germany invaded Russia in 1941, Vasili Nechitailo was a student at Moscow's prestigious Surikov Art Institute. He had enrolled there after several years of study at Krasnodar Art College in southern Russia. At the Surikov Art Institute, teachers vied for the young artist's talents, but the award of the Institute's first Stalin scholarship sealed his fate. He was assigned to receive instruction under the famous Sergei Gerasimov. In 1943, Nechitailo completed his studies in Samarkand, an ancient Silk Road town in Central Asia, where he and other outstanding Russian artists had been evacuated by the Soviet government for safety.

After the war, Vasili Nechitailo traveled extensively to create his remarkable works, but as years went by he was increasingly drawn to his beloved southern steppes. For several years, he served as the director of the House of Artists in the Kuban spa center of Goriachii Kliuch, at the foot of the spectacular Caucasus Mountains. Together with his wife Maria Savchenkova, herself an accomplished artist, he traveled through the vast farmlands of southern Russia in their Soviet-made *Pobeda* automobile to capture the beauty and energy of their sunlit native land. The renowned couple's artistic gene was passed on to their three children and several grandchildren who are currently pursuing successful careers as artists.