

## Mihail Chemiakin



Mihail Chemiakin was born in Moscow in 1943, grew up in occupied East Germany, where his father was a governor of several towns. He returned to Russia in 1957 where he was admitted to the Special High School of the Repin Academy of Art in Leningrad. He was expelled from art school for failing to conform to Socialist Realist norms, and from 1959-1971 worked as a labourer in various capacities. He was subjected to compulsory treatment at a mental institution, which was a standard way of dealing with ideological dissidents at that time. For five years he worked on the maintenance crew of the Hermitage Museum. In 1967, the artist founded the St. Petersburg Group and developed the philosophy of Metaphysical Synthesism, dedicated to the creation of a new form of icon painting based on the study of religious art of all ages and peoples. He had six exhibitions in USSR; all of them were arrested and lasted only 2 days.

In 1971 Chemiakin was forced out of the USSR by the Soviet authorities. He settled first in France, then moved to New York City in 1981. While in Paris he edited and published *Apollon-77*, an almanach of post-Stalinist art, poetry and photography in which many of the "non-conformists" were first published. Chemiakin also recorded and published the first disks of gypsy singers Vladimir Poliakov and Aliocha Dmitrievich, both of whom lived in Paris. He worked for several years with Russian bard Vladimir Vysotsky, systematically recording his songs for what became a seven-record set of Vysotsky's music. Chemiakin continues to publish books and music by under-recognized artists under the aegis of the Apollon Art Research Foundation.

In 1989, the return of Chemiakin's work to post-Communist Russia began with the first exhibition of his work there since his exile. Subsequently, he continued to show his work in Russia and has installed four monuments in St. Petersburg, to Peter the Great, to the Victims of Political Repressions, to the Architects and Builders of St. Petersburg, and to assassinated deputy mayor M. Manevich. Chemiakin's *Cybele: Goddess of Fertility* stands in New York's SoHo. A variation on the monument to Peter the Great is on permanent display in Normandy. In 1998 Chemiakin's *Monument to Giacomo Casanova* was installed in Venice in honor of the bicentenary of Casanova's death. *Dialogue between Plato and Socrates*, a memorial to Professor Harold Yuker, is installed at Hofstra University in New York; a monument to actor Savely Kramarov stands in San Francisco. Chemiakin's monument to *Children - Victims of the Sins of Adults*, commissioned by the city of Moscow, stands in Bolotnaya Square in the city's historic center.



The research begun in the 1960s into the art of all ages and peoples has developed into a collection of millions of images organized into technical, historical and philosophical categories which has earned the artist five Honorary Doctorates and is the basis for his Institute of the Philosophy and Psychology of Art.

Chemiakin participated in over 500 exhibitions all over the world. The artist's works can be found in many countries of the world, in private collections and museums, including: The Metropolitan Museum (New York), The State Russian Museum, The State Tretyakov Gallery (Moscow).