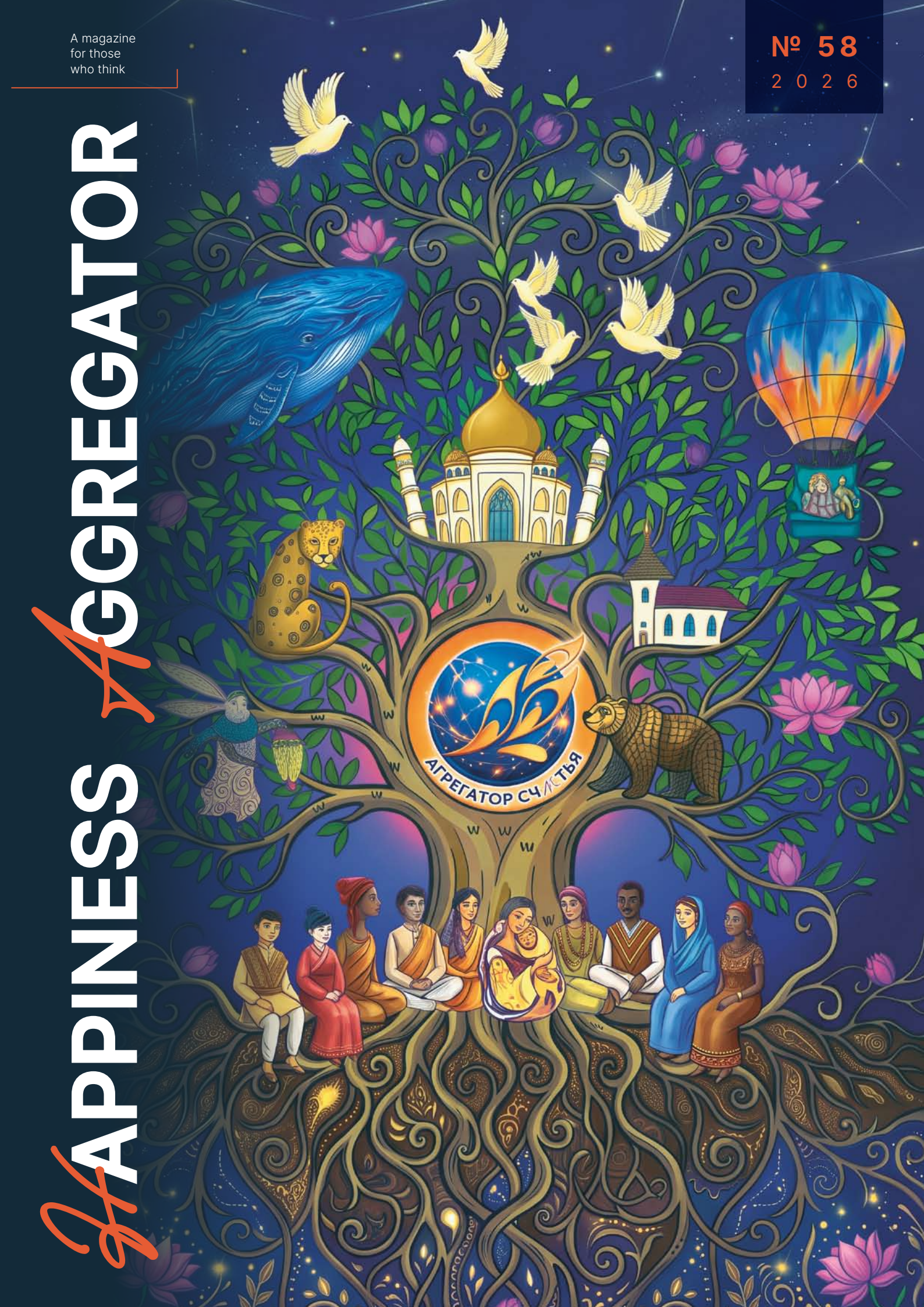
A magazine
for those
who think

HAPPINESS AGGREGATOR

№ 58
2026



«HAPPINESS AGGREGATOR»

A unique publication in which we share stories about what makes a person happy. We invite you to join our mission: to help people discover themselves, to create a world filled with happiness, smiles, and harmony for every inhabitant of planet Earth. Together, we can make life brighter and more joyful – for everyone, from a little child to a wise elder, regardless of their ethnic background or cultural traditions.

- You can share your own story, tell us about your journey toward self-discovery.
- You can introduce our readers to your unique work that brings happiness to people.
- You can tell us about your personal formula for happiness.

We are open to collaboration.
We are ready to collaborate.

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Dear friends!

I whole-heartedly welcome you to the pages of the first English-language issue of the magazine «Happiness Aggregator». For me, as the founder of the publication and Head of the Happiness Department at the Assembly of the Peoples of the World, this issue not just a translation – it is a real bridge: a bridge between cultures, between different ideas of happiness, and, most importantly, between the hearts of people who want to live consciously and make the world a brighter place.

For six years now, «Happiness Aggregator» has been published in Russian, and over this time we have become convinced how universal the very pursuit of happiness is. Today, the magazine is known in various regions of Russia, and it is well-known among Russian-speaking readers all over the world. The stories shared by our heroes resonated with readers from Vladivostok to Kaliningrad, from Minsk to Almaty, from Yerevan to Bishkek. And more and more often, we heard the same request: «Make the magazine accessible also for those who don't read or can't speak Russian».

So we made a decision: not just to translate one issue, but to create a full-fledged separate English-language-based magazine that preserves and captures the spirit and retains the mission of «Happiness Aggregator». In this issue, we have gathered the results of years obtained in our many years of experience, the experience of collaborationng with amazing people from different countries, and the results of studying research findings on how happiness is understood in all its diversity in the Arab world, in America, in China. After all, happiness looks different everywhere: in some cultures, it lies in silence and contemplation; in others, it is in a lively family feast; in yet others, it is in service and creation. But despite all these differences, there is also something in common: a sense of belonging, inner strength, and meaning and life purpose. It is this common foundation of happiness that we sought to show.

We believe in the two-percent theory: when only 2 percent of people in the world start thinking and talking about something, very soon this idea becomes a new paradigm for everyone. A paradigm that changes not only personal stories but entire communities. Today, we want the paradigm of happiness –



conscious, active, and uniting – to become closer and more understandable to even more people. We want everyone who opens this issue to feel that happiness is not a matter of chance, but a path that can be built day by day step by step, together with others.

May this issue become a reason for new conversations, new meetings and acquaintances, and new endeavors and deeds that make the world a kinder place. Thank you for being with us. May happiness be a common language that everyone understands.

With warmth and faith in the power of good meanings
Warmest wishes, Marina Volkova
Founder of the magazine «Happiness Aggregator»,
Head of the Happiness Department at the World Peoples Assembly,
Head of the CSCR Centre for socio-cultural and integrated rehabilitation «Happiness Aggregator»



Painting by Abbas Al-Musawi



Greetings, dear readers of the magazine!

I really hope that if you've picked up this publication, it means you, just like us, are pondering the simplest question in life – how to be happy. And this question is both simple and complex at the same time.

I often hear that the pursuit of happiness is about wanting to experience only joyful emotions to live a life where problems simply don't exist. That happiness is all about feelings, an uplifted mood, a constant smile on your face... But that's far from the truth. There are so many people in the world who live in appalling conditions, who face hardships, poverty, hunger, and health challenges. Yet surveys often show that, despite all this, many of them still feel happy.

We've already shared quite a few stories about how the sense of happiness doesn't depend on what's happening on the outside – it's born inside, in that quiet place of depth, calm, and boundless awareness, where you feel that everything is as it should be. And this quiet inner happiness guides a person through the toughest trials, serving as an inner backbone.

So how do we get there? How do we find that backbone, our inner support? We need to get to know ourselves. We need to ask ourselves questions and find the answers. To discover our values and meanings. To understand what truly matters to us and what doesn't. Not to be afraid to look even at the things we don't like about ourselves. And then, no matter what conditions, changes, or external influences come our way, they won't be able to affect a person's state of happiness.

Our world operates according to certain physical laws: any action requires energy. But where do we get it? From those who give it themselves. When we react to events without thinking – without asking why they're happening, what lies behind them, who benefits from them we give away a tremendous amount of our own energy. But when we observe and choose how to react, we preserve our energy and nourish our inner state of happiness – regardless of the circumstances around us. All of this can be learned, and in the pages of our magazine, we tell you how to do it.

It's no coincidence that we chose our slogan: "'Happiness Aggregator' – a magazine for those who think." Let's think together and multiply happiness in the world!

With deep faith in people,
Oksana Margiani.
Journalist, psychologist,
Honoured Worker of Culture
of the Russian Federation

Painting by Abbas Al-Musawi

Dear Friends!

In our magazine, often shared the idea that every person strives for happiness and can achieve it. For some, this is self-evident. Yet it's not always immediately clear whether your words are truly heard.

Recently, I attended the World Public Summit. Africa in Ethiopia, organized by The World Peoples Assembly. It was there that I reflected deeply on the universality of the desire for happiness. During my speech, the hall was completely silent. I spoke about the opportunities for young people to take part in international social projects and, in doing so, help raise the level of happiness for those around them. I talked about the projects "Ambassadors of Happiness," "The World Paints Happiness," "Letters of Happiness," and others. I also spoke about the principles underlying youth policy in our country.



Until the very end of my talk, I couldn't gauge the audience's reaction: did the topic resonate with them? Why were they sitting so still? But once the speech was over, I was inundated with questions. Our conversation continued at the project stand, where everyone wanted to learn how they could get involved. Many shared their own formula for happiness, writing it down right there on the stand.

That's when I realized we were all speaking the same language: regardless of nationality, everyone wants to be surrounded by people they can help – and who will help them in return; everyone wants the opportunity to seek out and create meaning in their lives. This isn't a conversation about borders and countries; it's about the person at the center of it all.

All it takes is one simple good deed for each of us. For example, I host a podcast called "Tales for Life," which features therapeutic stories in Russian that help people believe in themselves, feel more confident, happier, and healthier. This is our contribution – my sister Margarita's and mine– to social development. We are like "Ambassadors of Happiness," just like many other people who, without seeking grand titles, build small bridges of friendship every day – through words, actions, and support.

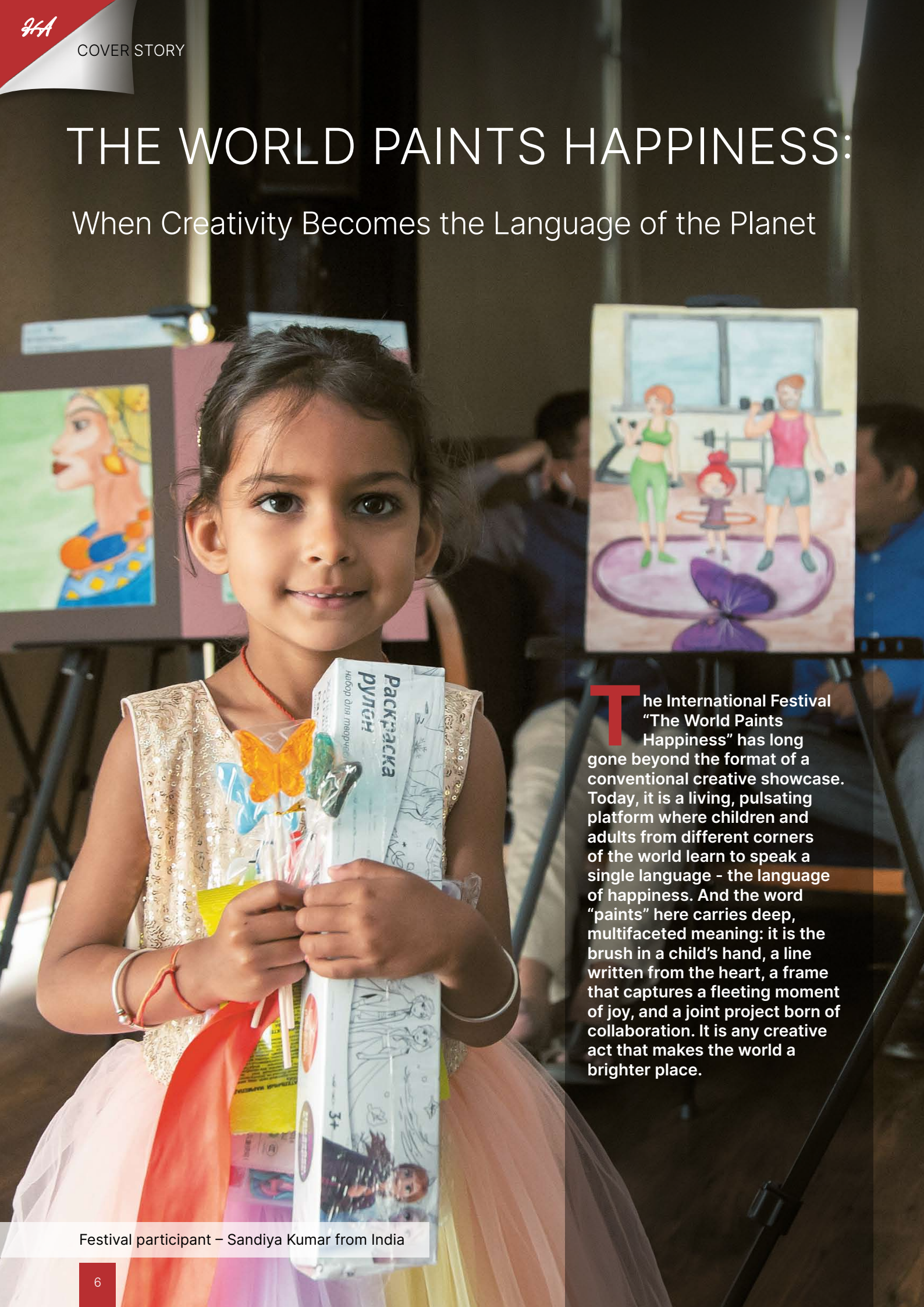
Among us are many young people who, despite their differences, share a common interest: making the world a better place. They want to be useful, to strive for justice, to value friendship and family, and to learn about the cultures of other countries.

Friends, let's become co-authors of positive change! Share your stories on the pages of our magazine, join local initiatives, launch your own projects, and become "Ambassadors of Happiness" in your communities!

Platon Mersiyanov,
Ambassador of Happiness,
Head of the "Invisible Wings" media volunteer corps, a student at HSE University, and a winner of the International #WeAreTogether Award (2023)

THE WORLD PAINTS HAPPINESS:

When Creativity Becomes the Language of the Planet



The International Festival "The World Paints Happiness" has long gone beyond the format of a conventional creative showcase. Today, it is a living, pulsating platform where children and adults from different corners of the world learn to speak a single language - the language of happiness. And the word "paints" here carries deep, multifaceted meaning: it is the brush in a child's hand, a line written from the heart, a frame that captures a fleeting moment of joy, and a joint project born of collaboration. It is any creative act that makes the world a brighter place.

Festival participant – Sandiya Kumar from India

Over four years, the festival has brought together 17,247 participants from 58 countries. Their creativity is not just competition entries – it is genuine messages of humanity. You can hear the voices of different cultures in their works, yet they all share one common note: the desire to see the world kind, just, and beautiful. The festival's goal is simple and yet sublime: to make every corner of the planet speak the language of happiness – the very language that sages and philosophers have pondered for centuries.

The festival's ambassadors are people whose lives and professions in themselves serve as inspiring examples. Nikas Safronov, People's Artist of Russia, reminds us that art has the power to connect hearts and erase borders. Oleg Artemyev, Hero of Russia and cosmonaut, shows that happiness is also a view of Earth from above – an awareness of its fragility and value. And the children and young people who actively promote the festival prove that the future of this good-hearted agenda lies in their hands.

In 2026, the baton of the festival's chairmanship passes to Irina Markova-Shagal, Marc Chagall's great-niece, an artist, poet, and public figure. We are confident that the event will reach a new level of depth and scale. The festival will be held under slogans that set not just a mood, but an entire philosophy of action:

- "Happiness is where it is cherished: for oneself, for the Motherland, for the Earth."
- "We draw a world we want to live in. We travel, leaving only a trace of happiness."
- "The house of happiness is our Earth. Favorite places live in the heart. Responsibility lies in every step."

These mottos are not just beautiful phrases. They are an invitation to conscious creativity and a responsible attitude towards the world. They remind us that happiness is not only an inner state but also a daily choice – to create, to cherish, and to respect our native land and the entire planet.



Dalbir Singh, Member of the Supreme Advisory Council of the World Peoples Assembly (India); Andrey Belyaninov, Secretary General of the World Peoples Assembly



Marina Volkova and Her Majesty Queen Temitope Enitan-Ogunwusi, wife of Emperor Ooni of Ile-Ife, Nigeria, at the I World Public Assembly in Moscow

We open the doors to the 5th International Festival "The World Paints Happiness." Let your voice, your perspective, and your creativity become part of this big, heartwarming story. Participate, create, and share your understanding of happiness - because when happiness is shared, it multiplies.

The Happiness Scarf: A Manifesto You Can Wear

A special artifact was born from the participants' works: the unique "The World Paints Happiness" scarf. It has become more than just a souvenir – it is a symbol of the movement, a visible sign of belonging to a community that believes in the power of kindness and mutual understanding.

The scarf is art that unites the planet. Its pattern brings together fragments of drawings from people on every continent: children's sketches, artistic images, naive and profound symbols of joy. From this diversity,







Festival participant



Oksana Margiani, Irina Mersianova, Director of the Centre for Studies of Civil Society and the Nonprofit Sector at the National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE University)

> ***At the heart of the composition is the feather of the Firebird. In Slavic culture, this is a symbol of wonder, good fortune, and positive change. Within the context of the festival, the Firebird becomes an image of creative energy and light that every participant carries.***

a single composition emerged, where nothing is secondary – every line matters because it represents a real person with their dream of a better world.

The central image on the fabric is the majestic Tree of Life – the Tree of Happiness. Its roots are grounded in tradition, its trunk is our shared Earth, and its branches stretch toward the light, symbolizing hope and progress. In the tree's crown, motifs typical of different regions are interwoven: plants, animals, and ornaments that tell stories of native nature and culture. The tree is not merely a drawing but a metaphor of unity: we are different, yet we live on the same planet and share the same desire – for life to be dignified, kind, and happy.

At the heart of the composition is the feather of the Firebird. In Slavic culture, this is a symbol of wonder, good fortune, and positive change. Within the context of the festival, the Firebird becomes an image of creative energy and light that every participant carries. The feather unites all the scattered fragments around it and reminds us that, despite differences in languages and traditions, our aspiration for light and happiness is shared. As the emblem of the "Happiness Aggregator," the feather represents concentrated energy of goodness – energy capable of changing the world.

Along the edges of the scarf, the phrase "The World Paints Happiness" is inscribed in calligraphy in four languages: Russian,

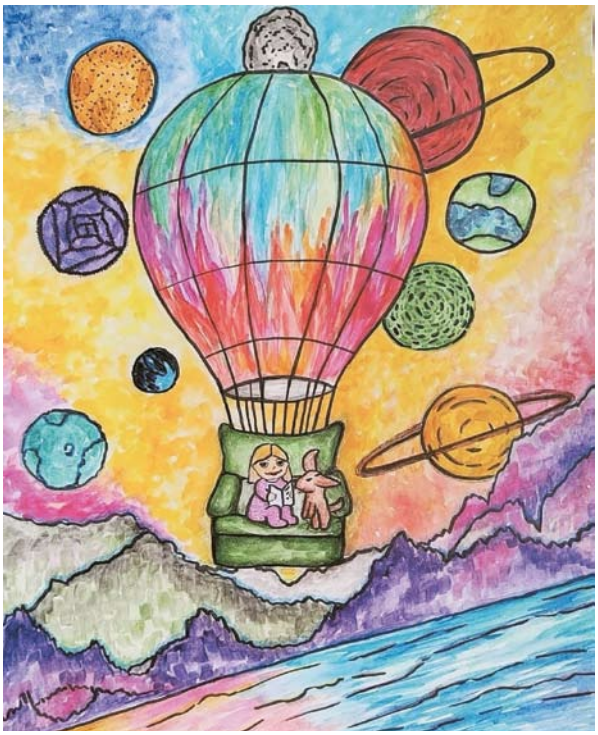
Today, the "The World Paints Happiness" scarf is the official attribute of the Ambassadors of Happiness. By wearing it, a person declares their position without words: "We are different, but we choose happiness."



Polina Prisych, Sochi, Russia. "Meeting the Whales"



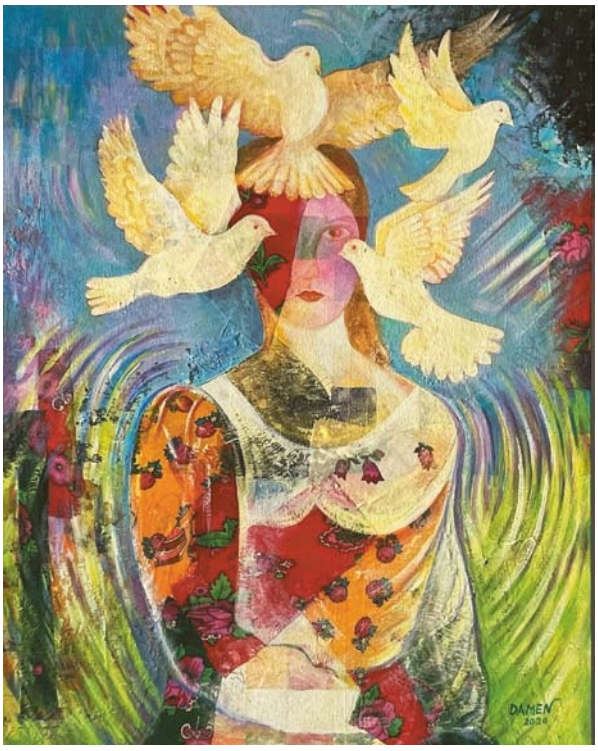
Vera Prokosheva, Saint Petersburg, Russia. "Gustav Klimt's Jungles"



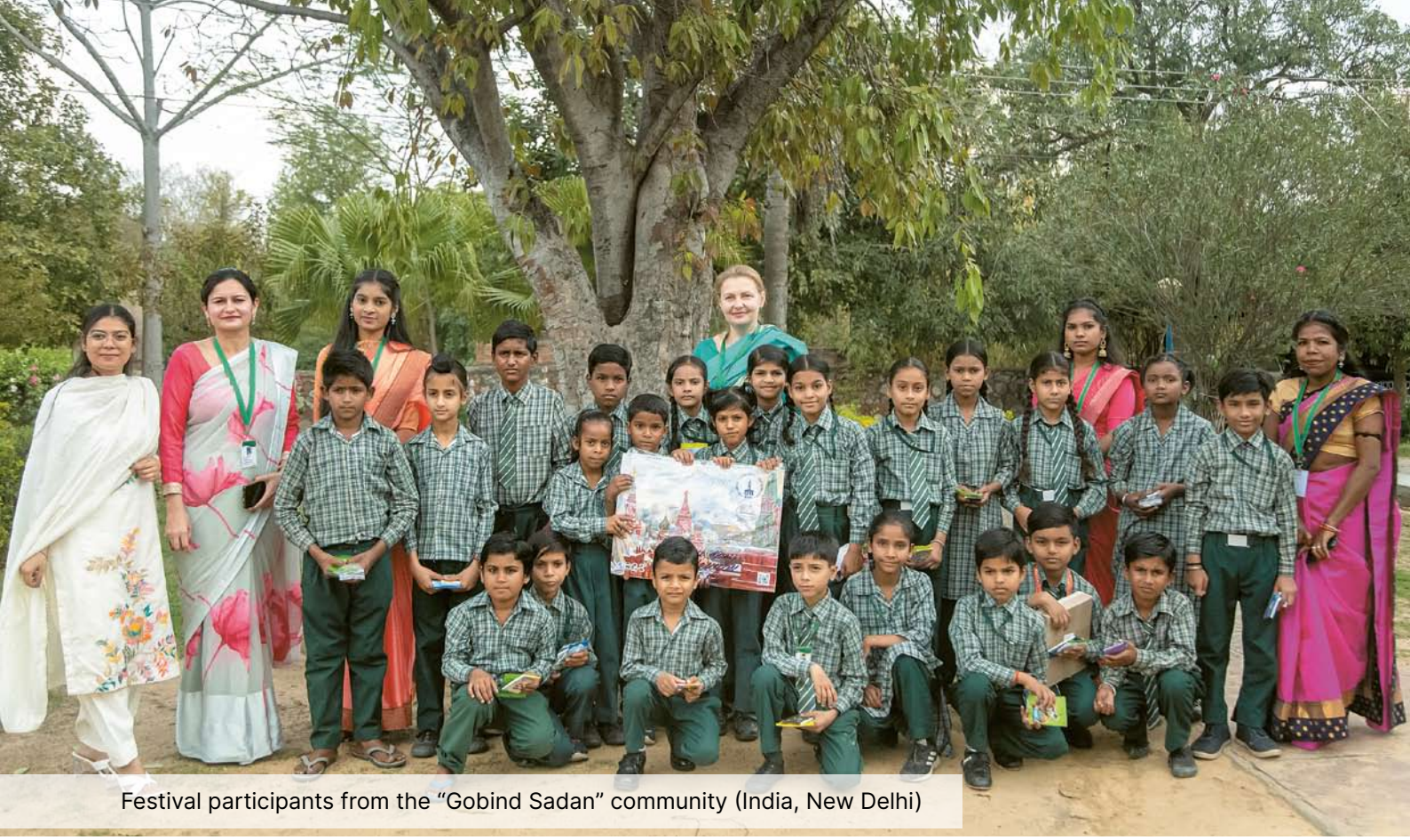
Anatoly Petukhov, Tuapse, Russia. "Fantasies"



Ksenia Selezneva, Nizhny Novgorod, Russia. "The Vastness of the Native Land"



Abduladeim Aldhamen, Dammam, Saudi Arabia. "The Dove of Peace"



Festival participants from the “Gobind Sadan” community (India, New Delhi)

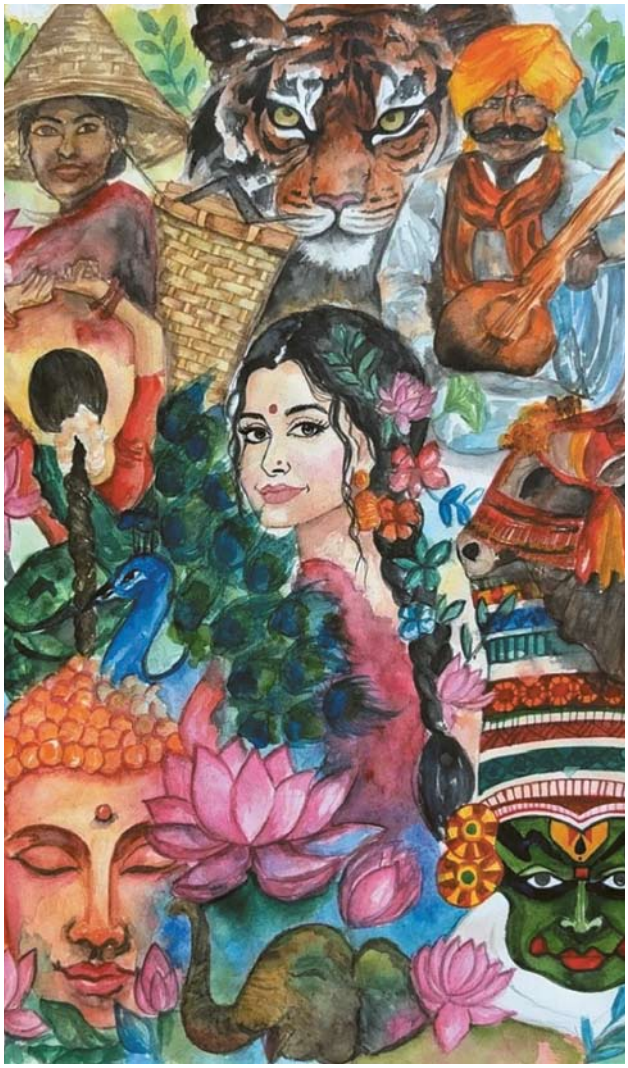
English, Chinese, and Arabic. This choice is not random: each language symbolizes a distinct cultural tradition, wisdom, and spiritual wealth. Together, they form a “linguistic ring of the world” that says: happiness is a universal value, understandable to everyone. And this phrase is not a mere statement – it is a call to action: our world is what we create with our hands, thoughts, and creativity.

Today, the “The World Paints Happiness” scarf is the official attribute of the Ambassadors of Happiness. By wearing it, a person declares their position without words: “We are different, but we choose happiness.” It is a sign of belonging to a large movement where every contribution matters, and even the smallest initiative can spark big changes.

An Invitation to Co-Creation

We open the doors to the 5th International Festival “The World Paints Happiness.” Let your voice, your perspective, and your creativity become part of this big, heartwarming story. Participate, create, and share your understanding of happiness – because when happiness is shared, it multiplies.

Join the festival and become part of a community where art is a bridge and kindness is the main language. Let us together draw a world where we want to live, create, and dream.



Rashi Beniwal, New Delhi, India. “The Harmony of a Thousand Cultures”



Ambassadors of Happiness

THE WORLD PEOPLES ASSEMBLY:

a Space Where Mutual Understanding Is Born and a Global Agenda of Well-being Is Built

The International Union of Non-Governmental Organisations the World Peoples Assembly is not just a venue for meetings; it is a living mechanism of public diplomacy, where representatives of different cultures learn to hear each other, and shared values become the foundation for joint action. The Assembly's mission directly resonates with the philosophy of the media holding "Happiness Aggregator": to build bridges of trust and show how well-being emerges from dialogue and creative labour.

From Idea to Global Scale

The mission of the World Peoples Assembly is to promote interethnic harmony, develop practices of people's diplomacy, and support projects that bring people together regardless of borders. After all, well-being is not an individual category it is a collective outcome.


Svetlana Smirnova, Chairperson of the General Council, World Peoples Assembly, Doctor of Political Sciences

More than five years ago, the Department of Happiness was established within the Assembly. Its task is to help translate the abstract notion of "happiness" into the language of concrete action: to form practices that strengthen trust in society, support mutual understanding between peoples, and demonstrate how creative labour becomes a source of personal and public well-being. The Department acts as a conceptual and methodological centre: it helps identify shared values that are understandable to people of different cultures and turn them into effective social tools.

It was within the walls of the Assembly that the "Ambassadors of Happiness" movement was born five years ago. The idea was simple: if we want to strengthen mutual understanding between peoples, we should start with the most accessible and universal language – the language of kindness and support. Thus, the concept "Human Happiness through Creative Labour for the Benefit of the Motherland" emerged. When a person does something useful, they not only help others but also strengthen their own identity and sense of belonging to something greater. Today, this idea has gained global reach: the movement has become an international network uniting local communities, practices, and leaders for whom creative labour is a real way to influence the quality of life around them.



Aimee Murphie Tshibola Lubeshi, Founder of the organization "Youth Union for the Future", Democratic Republic of the Congo

The Voice of the Assembly: Why It Exists

Andrey Belyaninov, Secretary General of the Assembly and one of the organisation's key voices, articulates its purpose this way: "The Assembly was created not to talk about peace, but to make peace. It is a space where words turn into projects, and projects into real changes in people's lives." This phrase captures the essence of public diplomacy: not abstract declarations, but actions that are clear and useful in every town and village.

Svetlana Smirnova, Chair of the General Council of the World Peoples Assembly, agrees: "Happiness is not just a personal state it is social fabric. When people do something good together, they create trust, and trust becomes the foundation for big changes." That is why the Assembly focuses on horizontal connections: supporting local leaders, replicating best practices, and creating conditions where any sincere initiative can grow into a meaningful public project.

In this context, the "Ambassadors of Happiness" movement has become an example for the Assembly of how an idea born in a small team can evolve into an international network. Support from Council members was

> **Members of the General Council of the World Peoples Assembly do not merely set the direction of work they create conditions for grassroots initiatives to grow and influence larger processes. Their position is simple: the strength of public diplomacy lies in horizontal connections, in supporting local leaders, and in replicating best practices.**

> *The Assembly was created not to talk about peace, but to make peace. It is a space where words turn into projects, and projects into real changes in people's lives.*



Participant of the Second World Public Assembly, Fabrice Sorlin, geopolitical analyst and specialist in French-Russian relations, father of 10 children

expressed not only through organisational decisions but also through conceptual legitimation: when respected public figures publicly recognise the value of emotional support practices and creative labour, it adds extra stability to the projects.

Global Formats: Numbers and Meanings

The scale of the Assembly is reflected in its key international formats, which gather more and more participants each year and form a sustainable agenda of public diplomacy:

The World Public Assembly is the central platform where community leaders, experts, and representatives of NGOs from dozens of countries discuss values, exchange practices, and launch joint initiatives. The II World Public Assembly, held in September 2026, brought together 6,012 participants from 154 countries, and the online audience exceeded 100,000 people. It was here that the "Ambassadors of Happiness" movement first reached the international level and gained recognition as a tool of people's diplomacy.

World Public Summits are events dedicated to specific areas: family, culture, education, and well-being. They give leaders of local projects the opportunity to present their practices on a global stage and find partners for scaling up.

Days of the Assembly in Different Countries are events that allow the common agenda to be adapted to local conditions.



Liliana Kawase, co-founder and executive producer of Titânio Films (Brazil, Portugal)



Mohamed Almuaini President of the Institute for Cultural Diplomacy in the UAE; Dr. Nidal Rabah, President of the Palestinian Association of Graduates of Russia and the CIS; Dr. Yaser Allaham, Advisor to the Secretary General of the World Peoples Assembly, Ambassador of Russian Education and Science; Dr. Ayman Dababat, Palestine. Secretary of the Club of Friends of Russia in Palestine

The International Festival “We Won Together” is a format that highlights the value of shared history, memory, and mutual aid. It brings together families, youth, veterans, and cultural centres and becomes a space where respect for the past turns into creative projects of the present.

The International Festival “The World Paints Happiness” is a creative platform where children, youth, and adults express their understanding of happiness and friendship through art. The latest festival brought together more than 5,000 authors from 45 countries; their works formed the basis of a travelling exhibition and a digital archive that continues to live in the media space.

These formats do not just gather people – they create an infrastructure of trust: they allow community leaders to see that their practices are in demand and their ideas can become part of a larger agenda.



Participant of the Second World Public Assembly

The “Service to Humanity” Award and Leadership in Public Diplomacy

An important element of recognising the contribution of leaders and communities is the “Service to Humanity” Award. Dalbir Singh, a member of the Supreme Advisory Council of the World Peoples Assembly, President of the Foundation for Policy and Governance, and Chair of the One Globe Forum (India), spoke about its significance: “This award is not just a prize it is a signal to society: serving others is the highest form of leadership, and it is precisely these kinds of deeds that should be



Irina Yumanova, Alla Kukina, Natalia Tozik – Ambassadors of Happiness



Performance by a group of various African ensembles at the Second World Public Assembly. Concert director and producer – Igor Skvortsov

visible, respected, and supported." The award recognises those who work systematically to strengthen mutual understanding, develop well-being practices, and create opportunities for others.

In 2026, the award was presented to several outstanding individuals from different countries:

Marcus Cesar Pontes (Brazil) – Brazil's first astronaut, senator, scientist, and public figure. Recognised for outstanding contributions to space exploration, science and education, and strengthening international cooperation.

Valery Ivanovich Tokarev (Russia) – Hero of the Russian Federation, pilot-cosmonaut. The award was granted for his contribution to space research, the development of international cooperation, and his long-standing service to people, the Fatherland, and humanity. An interesting fact: Tokarev and Pontes received the award together, and exactly 20 years earlier they worked together on the International Space Station.

Liza Sotilis (Greece) – artist, sculptor, and guardian of artistic heritage. Honoured for her long-term service to culture and art, preservation of artistic heritage, and strengthening of intercultural dialogue.

Ali Nasser Mohammed (Yemen) – statesman and political figure. Recognised for his long-term service to peace, development of public diplomacy, promotion of peaceful conflict resolution, and strengthening mutual understanding between peoples.

Vladimir Ivanovich Yakunin (Russia) – public figure and scientist. The award was given for his contribution to the development of the dialogue of civilisations, strengthening public diplomacy, preservation of cultural and spiritual values, and expansion of international humanitarian cooperation.

Tokon Bolotbekovich Mamytov (Kyrgyzstan) – lieutenant general and statesman. Honoured for his long-term public and state service, protection of human rights and dignity, strengthening of interethnic harmony, and development of good-neighbourly relations between peoples.

Fidel Antonio Castro Smirnov (Cuba) – a representative of a new generation of public leaders. Recognised for his contribution to preserving historical memory, strengthening friendship between the peoples of Cuba and Russia, and developing public diplomacy and humanitarian ties between Latin America and Eurasia.

The award was established by the World Peoples Assembly. It is granted to statesmen and public figures, representatives of science, culture, and cosmonautics from different countries – to those whose long-term work serves as an example of service to society, strengthening peace, mutual understanding between peoples, protection of human dignity, and responsibility for the future.

> **The mission of the World Peoples Assembly is to promote inter-ethnic harmony, develop practices of people's diplomacy, and support projects that bring people together regardless of borders. After all, well-being is not an individual category it is a collective outcome.**



David Okpatuma, Co-founder of the Development and Cooperation for Africa (DevCA) Initiative, Specialist in Humanitarian, Cultural, and Media International Cooperation at the Roscongress Foundation (Nigeria),
Viacheslav Ivanov, Chief Expert of the Centre for Studies of Civil Society and the Nonprofit Sector at the National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE University), Vice President of the Association European University of Volunteering



Fidel Antonio Castro-Smirnov, Member of the Academy of Sciences of Cuba, Deputy Secretary General of the World Peoples Assembly

The international project "Leader of Public Diplomacy" emphasises that diplomacy today is born not only in offices but also in schools, libraries, courtyards, and youth centres. It recognises those who build bridges between people, cultures, and generations every day.

The Role of the General Council: an Infrastructure for Supporting Initiatives

Members of the General Council of the World Peoples Assembly do not merely set the direction of work they create conditions for grassroots initiatives to grow and influence larger processes. Their position is simple: the strength of public diplomacy lies in horizontal connections, in supporting local leaders, and in replicating best practices.

The strength of the Assembly lies in the fact that it does not impose ready-made recipes but provides space and tools for people to find the best ways to strengthen trust and well-being in their own communities. A vivid example of this work is the Assembly's international platforms, where people from different countries learn to see the common in the diverse through simple yet meaningful formats. For instance, at the Second World Public Assembly, participants from dozens of states discussed what happiness means to them: family traditions, their native language, the opportunity to help, and a connection with nature. Such conversations do more than just bring people closer – they shape a new type of public diplomacy based on empathy, attention to the individual, and respect for cultural characteristics.

Thus, the World Peoples Assembly remains one of the most important spaces where the idea that well-being is created together receives real support and opportunities for growth. The "Ambassadors of Happiness" movement, the projects of the "Happiness Aggregator" media holding, t`he "Belt of Peace" project, international festivals, and awards all of these are parts of a single ecosystem where every person can become a carrier of positive meanings and a co-author of a large agenda of well-being. And this is its main contribution to the future: a world where happiness is measured not only by personal feelings but also by how much good we have been able to pass on.



Alexandra Ochirova:

“A PERSON MUST BE ABLE TO DEFEND THEIR VALUES”

Alexandra Vasilyevna is the founder and President of the country’s first non-governmental women’s organisation, the International Women’s Centre, which was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1995. The Centre is known for its innovative projects and programmes in the social sphere, addressing the status of children, women, and families in society, as well as issues of social security.

> **In the hierarchy of categories related to the human as the measure of all things, happiness holds a huge place. You can immediately see whether a person is happy or not; you can immediately feel it. I adhere to the definition expressed by Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy. He said that happiness is serving others and also having the ability to respect yourself from within.**

Laureate of the Lenin Komsomol Prize in the field of science. Awarded the Medal "For Labour Valour", the Order of Honour, and the Order of Friendship.

Today, Alexandra Vasilyevna's focus is on the humanitarian problems of modern civilisation and the place of the Human within it. Alexandra Ochirova is the author of scholarly works and poetry collections, a member of the Writers' Union of Moscow and the International Union of Journalists.

Alexandra Vasilyevna, what is happiness for you? How do you experience it?

People experience happiness in different ways. It is a very important category that is directly related to the human being. Many ancient thinkers in different countries and at different times addressed this category. Given my philosophical education, the knowledge I acquired has left its mark on my understanding of happiness.

At earlier stages of development, this understanding was more closely tied to what a person does, to discoveries in science, culture, education, and to the formation of such a community as the family. Different periods in the development of humankind differed from each other both in their opportunities and in what remained in a person's mind. Yet, to this day, wishing happiness remains an essential part of every celebration. It's just that everyone's happiness is their own, and not always similar.

For me personally, it means harmony – because much depends on how a person's life has unfolded. For example, I cannot speak about what I haven't experienced. It would have been a great happiness for me to have parents, but I lost them when I was only five years old. Probably, those who have parents would say, when answering such questions, that happiness is having your parents by your side – especially for a child.



REFERENCE

Alexandra Vasilyevna Ochirova

Co-Chair of the Supreme Advisory Council and Member of the General Council of the World Peoples Assembly. Member of the State Commission of the Russian Federation for UNESCO Affairs, UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador (Russia). Poet, stateswoman, political and public figure, scholar, Doctor of Philosophical Sciences, Academician of the Russian Academy of Arts. Deputy of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, First Convocation.

In the recollections of a very famous thinker, in response to a similar question, it was said: "To know what happiness is, you must first know what unhappiness is." I could use that as an answer, but I have always felt happy. Because the environment in my formative years – the space in which I grew up – was the beautiful Russian nature and books. I always felt like a person with the opportunity to develop my thoughts in line with what I read in books, what I learned at school, and later in my education. And I am very happy in my family.

Family is like in the well-known Marxist work on family, private property, and the state, where these issues were examined. It is presented as a structure that has survived through very long periods of time because it managed to endure as a basic unit of society, doing a great deal to ensure that a person's development moves upward s that the possibilities and functions of the family have changed not only in relation to its members but also in relation to society, the state, and so on – because the family is an important strategic resource. Many people, when asked about happiness, believe that family – family and children is happiness itself. And that is right.

I think that harmony among all the components of the civilisational space we live in is necessary for happiness to be truly accessible to the understanding and feelings of every person on Earth so that it is not tied to negative emotions. I think it also needs to be meaningfully conceptualisedin relation to the emotional state of the human soul. It is a value, a value in itself. As an example, I will cite the philosophical statement that goes back to Aristotle: "There is nothing in the mind that was not first in the senses."

In the hierarchy of categories related to the human as the measure of all things, happiness holds a huge place. You can immediately see whether a person is happy or not; you can immediately feel it. I adhere to the definition expressed by Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy. He said that happiness is serving others and also having the ability to respect yourself from within.

Why did I mention feelings? Because it is not an external influence it comes from within me: the feeling that a person is happy. This is understandable to everyone. When we say that we inherit traditions, values, and faith from previous generations, we must carry forward not only the understanding but also the feeling of happiness, so that it continues. When I began to engage with these problems and reflect on them, I called this "a new emotional and moral order."

I want all people to be happy. When we talk about the need to do something about what



is happening in the world today in a world that has become very dangerous both in the East and in the West – we must understand that the world has become more integrated than ever, yet it has ceased to be manageable. This entire integrity should be directed primarily towards eradicating war and hunger. I see this as the task of all countries and all peoples. The presence of these things in the life of the individual and of humanity will not allow us to say that the person and humanity are happy.

Today, the human being is practically removed from the mainstream of what is happening in the world and in countries, unlike in the ancient conception where the person was the measure of everything, as Protagoras said. In the Western values of a consumer society, with the development of such structures and even with the advancement of technological progress, which has managed to outpace the human develoment, the person is increasingly becoming a secondary mechanism and is sinking into conditions of mere survival – while they should be at the centre. The human is not only a biosocial being of the earthly plane; they are also a cosmic earthly being, because even a puddle on the ground does not form without the sky. Everything is very interconnected.

One thinker said that when a person stood up and acquired an upright posture, the second feature that now distinguishes them from the rest of the animal world is their brain – the ability to think and learn endlessly. A person should live in such a learning environment and themselves develop and pass on to future generations what they have. This meaningful spiral, this whirlwind in which a person lives, should not end. But there is a danger that it all might end.

In your view, what should a person do to ensure that this does not happen?

I think that, given that the person has acquired an upright posture, the main thing is to use their brain. And we must remember that some cells responsible for its activity may die off if they are not engaged. Therefore, it is so important to restore the central place of the person in civilisation and to endow them with the kind of freedom that would not interfere with the freedom of other people: the freedom to do what they would like to do, developing the abilities that nature and God have given them. A person should not be restricted in the creative process in everything that concerns their every day and their entire life. Categories such as morality and truth must be the main regulators, for they are the most strategic resource for the development of the individual and of society. And everyone must understand this, because such thoughts have arisen in all civilisations and among all peoples.

At certain stages of a person's formation and enrichment, something always emerges and something remains, and culture is the most meaning-generating sphere. It is the primary sphere of human activity. It contains not only what language provides; it also carries values to help govern this world, to raise our children properly, and to ensure that the generational continuity is preserved among all peoples so that they do not disappear. This brings us closer to the understanding that happiness is very close to the concepts of the meaning of life and the ideal – although the ideal can never become reality. And if a person stops respecting themselves from within, they can never be called happy.

Religious documents, tablets, the Bible, the commandments – nowhere is it more clearly stated what a person must never do: kill, envy, and so on. I cannot say that the wars that have been waged throughout the entire existence of humankind, over hundreds of years, have contributed to this. But a person must be able to defend their values. Moreover, civil society has already taken shape in many countries and should have its place in making decisions that concern everyone. This voice must sound professionally and responsibly, and such important categories as security and responsibility, time and space, must be used together.

The policies pursued in the world and diplomatic contacts must not ignore what civil society wants, what it must not lose, and what every individual must not lose. This is an area where the intrinsic value of human life must become a priority, a standard that is written into all constitutions, into all interactions – both within countries, between the state and civil society, and at the interstate level. I cannot say that this is currently present.

I would like to live in a civilisation of meaning and not have to note for myself the risks that overflow the world and every individual's life. These risks are found in the family, in educational processes, and in entertainment activities, when we go and listen to things that



Alana Kochieva – Head of the Department for the Development of International Education and Partnerships at the World Peoples Assembly, Alexandra Ochirova – UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador, Alsou Abramova (Alsou) – UNESCO Artist for Peace, Zarifa Mgoyan (Zara) – UNESCO Artist for Peace

> *The human is not only a biosocial being of the earthly plane; they are also a cosmic earthly being, because even a puddle on the ground does not form without the sky. Everything is very interconnected.*

are not what we could carry away in our heart, soul, and mind. They also relate to ensuring standards of quality of life.

And what do you see as the main prerequisites for arriving at a civilisation of meaning? What steps should humanity take?

I think strategic resources must be engaged. Happiness is a strategic category, but it must be meaningfully conceptualised. It is not just the pictures that children draw. Children always express something that adults should pay attention to. But this must be meaningfully conceptualised by the people who make decisions.

Right now, I cannot say that a moral component is present. To maintain the stability of development, military alliances and interstate relations are formed, but morality is almost never used. And yet, it is the strongest and highest category inherent to the human species.

Again, I will recall my beloved Lev Tolstoy. All his novels, as well as those of Dostoevsky, were devoted to this category. Lev Nikolaevich reflected on what morality is. It should be present in practically all types of human activity, in science, even in trade. Our development is nothing other than the clarification and dissemination of morality.

Morality is the responsibility of every individual; it should be present in legislation. Politics has many definitions: as the art of the possible, as a “dirty business”... but it must cease to be that if we want to preserve humanity. It should become the regulator that Kant expressed in words: “Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing wonder and awe, the more often and more steadily we reflect upon them: the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me.” This is what we should follow. Civilisation must have a human face.

When meanings collapsed in human history, a spiritual and moral crisis always arose. Then civilisations collapsed from within, and the human personality broke down.

We are now on the threshold of this. We can see fascism, nationalism, intolerance – anything you like. The spiritual arsenal must rid itself of these. Scientific and technological progress has outpaced human progress and pushed the human aside. Digitalisation, through legislation, by solving issues of step-by-step and time-based accessibility to certain services – primarily information

services – has indeed made the world truly connected, as the Internet did. But in this space, you can often encounter fakes, distortions, and the replacement of truth with something very subjective and not coming from very pure hands.

A person needs to think about how to correct this and to understand that, after all, they created artificial intelligence and all five generations of modern cybernetics. This must be approached meaningfully, not allowing AI to reach the level of decision-making that concerns everyone. The category of responsibility in the use of these tools must be spelled out so that the brain does not stop developing, and so that the child's organism, which uses computerisation in learning processes, does not suffer.

I have participated in several very serious conferences concerning the governance of the world and the incorporation of cybernetic capabilities and artificial intelligence. And still, those who conceived these things – very prominent figures – agreed that the next stage of civilisation should have humanitarian and technological characteristics, not the other way around. The person must remain in their central place. The roles of public organisations and information are great. Information, as a connecting link in all systems, must be filled with the most important categories – truth and morality.

Alexandra Vasilyevna, you said that sometimes it is necessary to defend your moral values at the state level. How, in your opinion, can this be done peacefully?

This should always be done peacefully, whenever possible. Not losing one's identity is one of the main goals for the individual and for humanity. On the other hand, one must know the strategic resources of development. Diversity is a strategic resource – not when one culture absorbs another, but when it gives it the opportunity to develop.

For example, the Great Silk Road. There is even a Silk Road Committee in UNESCO. In those caravanserais, it wasn't just trade deals that took place. Mutual exchange and interconnection were also strategic resources. Poets and doctors travelled in the caravans; they exchanged knowledge and returned home. One could say that through interaction, the world developed, states were formed, and language evolved.

But there is a very serious matter: identity. If we look at the colonial period, we will see how identity was broken. But pre-revolutionary Russia developed according to the principle of Eurasianism. In my view, this was facilitated by the way peoples were settled, and despite a number of problems, there was no goal to destroy one people by another. The Soviet Union is an example. It contains much that could be used for the interaction of cultures, the preservation of languages and traditions. Because identity is a key category for the individual and for civilisation.

Of course, there are other interests as well. They are formed on a completely different basis: national superiority, conquest. History is a very variegated and multi-layered process, and this diversity appeared precisely because of interaction; one of the key reasons is the interaction between cultures. And diversity is simply a strategic resource, just like continuity.

All these categories must be brought together and offered to the multipolar world so that humanitarian modernisation can proceed, so that the vector of this direction, which exists in a person's mind, is not broken. So that there are no lost generations. So that a person thinks like a human being.

Who could take on this initiative?

The people themselves should take on this initiative. I believe that Russia, in its proposals to the world, has very often presented principles that could be followed.

The world is very diverse and structured in many different ways; it has different modes of production and regimes. But I think that what exists in Russia can be used by the whole world. It is the diversity of peoples who, despite all their differences, survived and defended their common independence through very difficult trials. We need not speak of them here, but all of humanity should remember them. I think that the multipolar world absolutely cannot be built without Russia.

We need a form of governance that is adequate and appropriate in this case. This complex and holistic world needs a corresponding form of governance, because the simple cannot govern the complex. And we need to ensure that all the risks and challenges that exist today, at different levels of human civilisation and in different countries, are transformed in subsequent development into priority goals for sound decisions.

Media volunteers of the "Invisible Wings" corps

AMBASSADORS OF HAPPINESS:

How a Network of Bridges of Friendship and Mutual Understanding Was Born Over Five Years

Ambassadors of Happiness: From an Idea to a Worldwide Movement

Five years ago, a simple yet profound thought emerged at the Happiness Department of the World Peoples Assembly and the Center for Sociocultural Rehabilitation and Development "Happiness Aggregator": happiness is something you want to share. This was the start of the "Ambassadors of Happiness" movement, whose mission is to help everyone discover their own source of goodness and become a conduit of positive meaning in their surroundings. Today, it is no longer just a local initiative but a growing network of communities, and the team firmly intends to turn it into a true global movement.

How It All Began

Initially, the movement was built on the belief that happiness is not a passive state but an action. When a person notices something good, supports another person, or creates something useful, they set off a chain reaction of kindness. That is why it is appropriate to compare the "Ambassadors of Happiness" to cultural volunteers: just as volunteers preserve and spread values through creativity, the "Ambassadors of Happiness" spread well-being through conscious kind actions and the ability to build dialogue.

A major milestone was 2026, when the project "Ambassadors of Happiness: Bridges of Friendship and Mutual Understanding" received support from the Presidential Grants Fund. This enabled the scaling of practices and made them accessible to a larger number of people. At the Second World Public Assembly, both Russians and citizens of other countries showed genuine interest in the movement: they saw it not as a pretty metaphor but as a working mechanism for strengthening mutual understanding and increasing personal and public well-being.

The Movement's Philosophy: Creative Labor as the Language of Happiness

At the core of the global movement lies the concept "Human Happiness through Creative Labor for the Benefit of the Motherland." It connects the personal and the public: when a person does something useful, they not only help those around them but also strengthen their own identity and sense of belonging to something greater. In an international context, creative labor becomes a universal language that people of different cultures can speak.

> *The strength of the movement lies in the fact that its practices do not require complex infrastructure. They can be launched in a school, library, youth center, NGO, or simply within a circle of friends. That is why many cities and countries have already begun developing their own "communities of happy people": initiative groups organize workshops, run games, create "trees of happiness," and continue "The Longest Letter of Happiness."*



Platon Mersiyanov – Ambassador of Happiness





The Exemplary Artistic Collective "Nadezhda Sochi". Director – Nadezhda Ulitina, Honored Worker of Culture of the Russian Federation, choreographer

This philosophy does not remain abstract; it is embodied in concrete formats that easily take root in various communities:

"The Longest Letter of Happiness" – a collective message that travels from city to city and from country to country. Everyone adds a line: a wish, a memory, a word of gratitude, or an idea on how to make the world kinder. The letter grows, becoming a chronicle of human hopes and good intentions.

"The Tree of Happiness" – a real or digital tree where people hang cards with kind deeds, dreams, and words of gratitude. The tree becomes covered with stories, and the community – with trust and mutual support.

Signing "Letters of Happiness" Postcards – a simple but very warm format. Postcards are sent to those who especially need support, as well as to colleagues, teachers, and mentors. It is a way to say: "You matter, you are not alone."

The "Multinational Happiness" Game helps people talk about values in an easy and engaging way. Participants from different cultures share what happiness means to them: family traditions, their native language, favorite work, the opportunity to help, or a



connection with nature. Through the game, stereotypes disappear, a genuine interest in others' experiences emerges, and a shared space of trust is created.

Educational Ecosystem: Tools for Creation

To ensure participants can not only be inspired but also take action, the movement offers a full-fledged educational model that combines emotional support practices, educational formats, and project activities:

"Happiness Workshop" provides practical skills: emotional intelligence, empathy, communication, and stress resilience. Participants learn specific techniques for supporting others and maintaining inner balance.

"Workshop on the Economics of Happiness" reveals the link between socio-economic conditions and the level of well-being. Participants learn to see how access to education, the quality of the urban environment, stability, and opportunities for self-realization affect the sense of happiness.

Research and Project Activities allow people to study well-being and launch local initiatives. Examples include the "Happy School" and "Parents' Support Club" projects, which began as pilot ideas and later became examples of systemic change in community atmosphere.





> ***Volunteers and NGO representatives play a special role in the movement: for them, the "Ambassadors of Happiness" become a tool to strengthen already existing initiatives. New methods make projects more sustainable and people-centered.***

"Happiness Festival. Values Bring Us Together" serves as a final platform where participants present their projects, conduct workshops, and take part in contests and discussions. The festival creates a community of like-minded people where everyone feels that their contribution matters.

Volunteers and NGO representatives play a special role in the movement: for them, the "Ambassadors of Happiness" become a tool to strengthen already existing initiatives. New methods make projects more sustainable and people-centered.

Communities of Happy People: The Power of Local Steps

The strength of the movement lies in the fact that its practices do not require complex infrastructure. They can be launched in a school, library, youth center, NGO, or simply within a circle of friends. That is why many cities and countries have already begun developing their own "communities of happy people": initiative groups organize workshops, run games, create "trees of happiness," and continue "The Longest Letter of Happiness."

Such communities become points of growth for well-being: they do not wait for ideal conditions but start acting here and now. Each such local project is a small bridge of friendship and mutual understanding that weaves into the overall network of the global movement.

The Path to a Global Movement

Developing the global "Ambassadors of Happiness" movement is not about centralized management but about supporting initiatives, sharing best practices, and creating a unified infrastructure for their replication: teaching materials, online platforms, and media content. This way, every participant can find a suitable format, adapt it to their context, and become a conduit of positive meaning.

Anyone can become an "Ambassador of Happiness," regardless of age, profession, or experience. You don't need to be an expert; all you need is the desire to share kindness and make the world around you a little brighter. You can:

- launch a "Tree of Happiness" in your city or organize a postcard-signing event;
- hold the "Multinational Happiness" game in a classroom, student group, or at a family celebration;
- join "The Longest Letter of Happiness" and pass it on;
- propose your own format that reflects the values of your community.

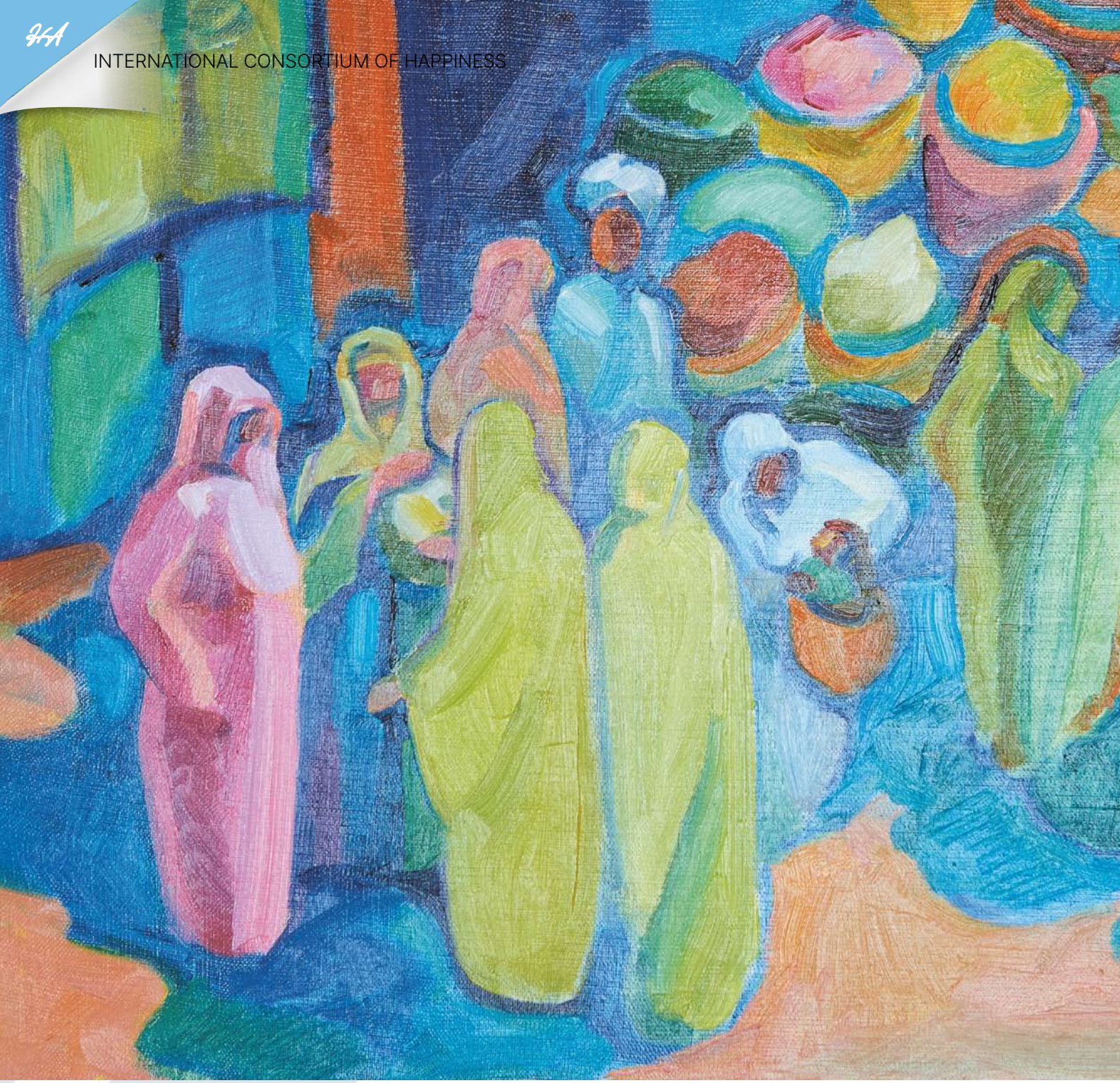
Your contribution will become part of a large network of positive changes, because a global movement is not born from top-down directives but from thousands of small yet sincere steps taken by people all over the world. And happiness, as we know, only shines brighter when it is shared with others.

Alexey Volkov



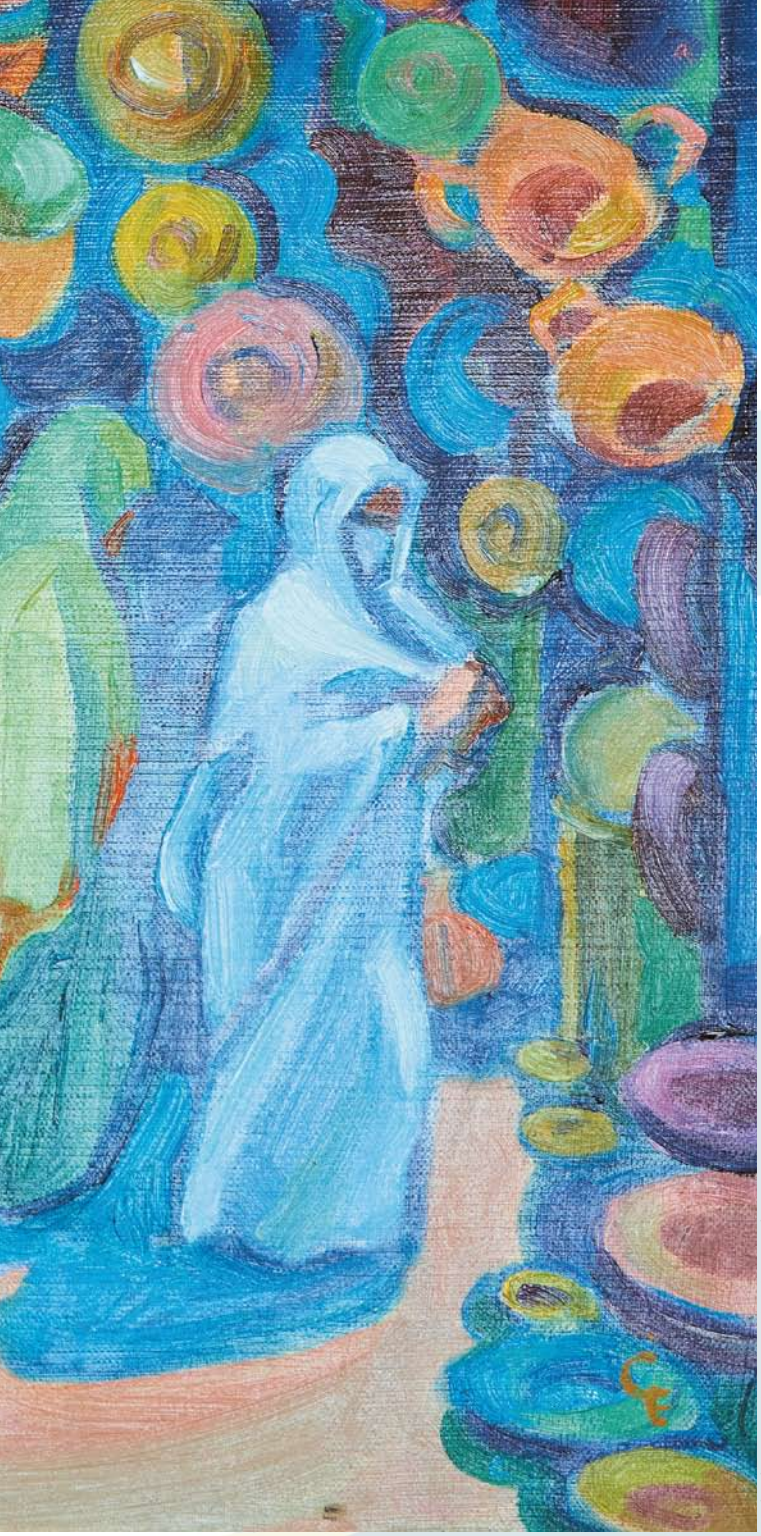


Alla Kukina and the Kolyada Folk Song Ensemble led by Rimma Karaseva



Rating the Norms of the Future:

Happiness as the Main Standard



Painting by Abbas Al-Musawi

In a world where change is happening faster than ever before, we increasingly find ourselves wondering: what will our future look like? Who is shaping it? And, most importantly, by what criteria do we choose what it should be? The media holding "Happiness Aggregator" invites us to look at this question through the lens of the most important thing – happiness. What if we were to rate the norms of the future not by profit, efficiency, or technological advancement, but by the level of happiness they bring to every person?

What Does It Mean to Rate the Norms of the Future?

In modern society, a rating is not just a number or a place on a list. It is a tool of influence, a way to set the direction of development. We are used to seeing ratings of companies, cities, and universities. But what if we rated not only what already exists, but also what is yet to be created? Imagine this: every new standard, every social or technological norm, goes through a happiness filter. How will it change people's lives? Will the world become kinder, warmer, more harmonious?

Happiness – the Main Criterion

The international media holding "Happiness Aggregator" proposes a new paradigm: the norms of the future should be rated by how much joy, trust, support, and inspiration they bring. It doesn't matter how innovative a technology is if it doesn't make people happier. It doesn't matter how efficient a system is if it deprives a person of meaning and warmth.

In modern society, a rating is not just a number or a place on a list. It is a tool of influence, a way to set the direction of development. We are used to seeing ratings of companies, cities, and universities. But what if we rated not only what already exists, but also what is yet to be created? Imagine this: every new standard, every social or technological norm, goes through a happiness filter.





How Does It Work?

Collective discussion. Every person is an expert in their own happiness. Let children and adults, scientists and artists, residents of megacities and small villages all take part in creating the rating. Let every voice be heard.

Transparency and inclusivity. The rating is not a closed club of experts; it is an open platform where anyone can propose their own norm for the future and explain why it will make the world happier.

Flexibility and updating. Happiness is not a static category. What brought joy yesterday may not work tomorrow. Rating the norms of the future means being ready to revise standards, to learn from other cultures, and to be inspired by examples from all over the world.

An International Perspective

In this issue, we have collected stories and practices from different countries: in some places, happiness means caring for nature; in others, it means supporting the vulnerable; in yet others, it means the freedom to be oneself. We see that happiness is universal, yet its nuances are unique to each culture. Rating the norms of the future means respecting this diversity, learning from one another, and creating a space for dialogue.

Practice: How to Rate Happiness?

In schools: rate not only grades, but also the atmosphere in the classroom, the level of support, and the number of smiles.

In cities: rate not only infrastructure, but also the sense of safety, the accessibility of joy, and the opportunities for creativity.

In companies: rate not only profits, but also employee well-being, contribution to society, and environmental responsibility.

Inspiring Examples

In Japan, they rate the “smile index” in schools. In Denmark, they measure the level of trust between neighbours. In Canada, they focus on the accessibility of nature for all. In Russia, initiatives are emerging where residents themselves choose which projects will make their courtyard or city happier. All of these are steps towards a future where happiness is not a dream, but a standard.

Rating the norms of the future means taking responsibility for what our common home will look like. Let happiness become the main criterion – not ephemeral, but real, measurable

in smiles, support, trust, and the opportunity to be oneself. Let every new standard go through the filter: "Will this make the world happier?"

Join the mission of the "Happiness Aggregator": discover happiness for yourself and share it with the world. Let the future be not only technologically advanced, but truly happy for every inhabitant of planet Earth.

The editorial team of the "Happiness Aggregator" invites readers from all over the world to share their stories, norms, and happiness ratings. Let our international magazine become a platform for sharing light, warmth, and inspiration!

MANIFESTO: NORMS OF THE FUTURE HAPPY PERSON

An initiative of the International Happiness Consortium, continuing the development of the Declaration of Happiness (include a QR code linking to the electronic version of the Declaration) and the global movement of ministries and communities of happiness.

We, the participants of the International Happiness Consortium, representatives of ministries, communities, and happiness movements from different countries, united by our experience in implementing the Declaration of Happiness, propose the following document for open discussion and approval.

Preamble

In the 21st century, happiness is becoming not only a personal goal but also a strategic priority for states, communities, and international organisations. Following the adoption of the Declaration of Happiness and the creation of happiness ministries in various countries, we see the need to form new norms, ratings, and standards that will allow us to measure and develop happiness as a universal value for the future.

I. The Rating of the Happy Person of the Future: Principles and Objectives

1 Happiness – the Main Criterion of Development

All new norms, laws, educationaland social standards must go through the filter: "Does this make the person and society happier?" The rating of the happy person is not a tool for competition; it is a roadmap for growth, support, and inspiration for everyone.



> We, the participants of the International Happiness Consortium, representatives of ministries, communities, and happiness movements from different countries, united by our experience in implementing the Declaration of Happiness, propose the following document for open discussion and approval.

> Рейтинг формируется на основе коллективного участия: каждый человек, семья, сообщество, министерство счастья может предложить свою норму и аргументировать её значимость. Учитываются культурные, возрастные, индивидуальные и национальные особенности. Каждый голос важен, независимо от различий между людьми.

2 Openness and Equal Opportunities for All

The rating is formed through collective participation: every person, family, community, and happiness ministry can propose their own norm and argue for its significance. Cultural, age-related, individual, and national characteristics are taken into account. Every voice matters, regardless of the differences between people.

3 Transparency and Trust

All data, methodologies, and rating results are open for discussion, verification, and improvement. Independent experts, community representatives, children, young people, and older adults all participate in the rating process.

II. Norms of the Future Happy Person (Continuation of the Declaration of Happiness)

1 Inner Harmony and Mindfulness

Skills in emotional intelligence, stress resilience, the ability to enjoy life, and gratitude. Access to mental health care practices for everyone.

2 Social Inclusion and Support

A well-developed culture of mutual aid, trust, and community engagement. The opportunity to be heard and supported in any life situation.



3 Responsibility for the Common Good

Environmental awareness, participation in the preservation of nature and resources. Contribution to the development of a safe, friendly environment where everyone's dignity is respected.

4 Freedom of Self-Realisation

The right to individuality, development of talents, access to education and creativity. Support for diversity, respect for personal boundaries and individual characteristics.

5 Innovation and Openness to the Future

Willingness to learn, adapt, and implement new happiness practices. Inspiration to search for new meanings, participation in shaping the future.

III. Mechanisms for Rating and Implementation

1 International Happiness Rating Platform

An online portal where anyone can propose a norm, vote, and share a success story. Integration with ministries and happiness communities in different countries.

2 Annual Global Happiness Forum

Discussion of best practices, updating the rating, and adoption of new norms. Awarding international prizes for contributions to human happiness.

3 Development of Happiness Ministries and Communities

Establishment of new happiness ministries, happiness departments within government bodies, and happiness communities in cities and regions. Exchange of experience, joint projects, and support for local initiatives.

IV. Call to Action

Discuss these norms in families, schools, businesses, and government bodies.

Integrate them into national and corporate strategies, educational programmes, and urban environments.

Become an initiator or participant of a happiness community in your region or country.

Share inspiring stories – let happiness become the virus of the future!



V. For Approval and Development

This manifesto is open for discussion, amendment and approval at international and national platforms. The International Happiness Consortium invites all countries, ministries, communities, and every individual to join in shaping a future where happiness is the main rating, the main norm, and the main goal.

Let the rating of the future happy person become a bridge between countries, generations, and cultures. Let happiness unite, inspire, and lead us to a world where everyone can be themselves and be happy!

International Happiness Consortium, 2026

HAPPINESS AS SERVICE:

Dr. Khaled Qandil – a Man Who Bridges Science, Politics, and Kindness

Happiness is not just an emotion, it's an action. It's the choice we make every day to be a pillar of support for others, to see someone else's pain as our responsibility, and to recognise that even a small good deed can be the seed of significantchange. Dr. Khaled Muhammad Abdel Monem Qandil, an Egyptian public figure, scholar, politician, writer, and humanist, is a living example of this idea. His life shows how different fields of work can unite around a single common goal: making the world kinder and more just.

Happiness Starts with Caring for the Most Vulnerable

Every family lives by an unshakable principle: true happiness is built on caring for those who are weaker. Dr. Qandil puts this principle into concrete action. He doesn't just talk about social justice,he acts on it. For example, in 2020, he personally donated 150,000 Egyptian pounds to cover the educationexpenses for around 350 students from the Beheira Governorate children from families facing serious financial hardship. The funds were distributed in a targeted way: a team of volunteers assessed each family's situation and provided support precisely to those for whom it was vital.

Why does this matter? When a child from a poor village can go to school without worrying that their family will be forced to pay for something that should be accessible to all, that becomes the foundation of personal well-being. It gives the child a sense of security, confidence in their own abilities, and the freedom to dream. And when society systematically supports such families, the whole community becomes happier.

From Science to Service: How Education Becomes a Tool for Good

Dr. Qandil's journey shows that happiness emerges where knowledge serves people. He began as a pharmacist, graduating from the Faculty of Pharmacy at Cairo University, then studied clinical pathology and microbiology. Later, he added a law degree and training in non-profit management, realising that to change the system, you need not only scientific knowledge but also an understanding of laws, governance mechanisms, and how society is structured.

This combination of skills has allowed him to influence health and social protection policies. Today, he serves as Secretary of the Health and Population Committee of the Egyptian Senate. In this role, Dr. Qandil promotes ideas directly linked to family well-being. For instance, he proposed providing every school with a qualified social worker to identify cases of violence early and offer help to children and women. For families, this means their child is protected not only at home but also at school – a major contribution to their sense of safety and happiness.

Humanitarianism Without Borders: When Help Becomes a Shared Mission

Happiness also means being able to feel someone else's pain as your own. Dr. Qandil participates in humanitarian convoys delivering food to the Gaza Strip, where civilians face harsh conditions and shortages of basic necessities. For him, there are no "other people's" problems: if people are suffering anywhere, that's a reason to act.

This carries an important message : we can nurture empathy in children not just through words, but through real examples. When adults show that helping can extend beyond the neighbours in their building to people on the other side of the world, children learn to see the world more broadly and understand that their good deeds are part of a larger chain of support.

History as a Source of Strength: Why Remembering and Reinterpreting Matters

Another dimension of happiness is the sense of belonging to something greater: to



> **Dr. Khaled Qandil's story is inspiring not because he is a "perfect hero," but because it shows that happiness is daily work. It's the combination of professionalism and humanity, knowledge and compassion, personal ambitions and care for others.**

a family, a nation, and the history of one's country. Dr. Qandil takes a serious interest in the history of the Wafd Party and Egypt's national movement. He writes books that offer new perspectives on complex and controversial chapters of the past. For example, his work The Events of February 4: A New Reading of History helps shed light on how modern Egyptian state was shaped. And in his novel Meeting at the Scarlet Cake, he shows how major historical changes affect ordinary people's lives – their fears, hopes, and choices.

This approach teaches an important lesson: happiness isn't only about "here and now"; it's also about the connection between generations, respect for the past, and responsibility for the future.



> When a child from a poor village can go to school without worrying that their family will be forced to pay for something that should be accessible to all, that becomes the foundation of personal well-being. It gives the child a sense of security, confidence in their own abilities, and the freedom to dream.



Painting by Abbas Al-Musawi

Creativity as a Way to Speak About What Matters

Dr. Qandil's literary and journalistic work is another proof that happiness can be conveyed through words. His articles and books help society discuss difficult topics: social justice, national identity, and the role of culture and education. This matters for families too: when parents and children can read and discuss such texts together, they learn to listen to each other and discover shared values.

What Can We Take from This Story for Ourselves?

Dr. Khaled Qandil's story is inspiring not because he is a "perfect hero," but because it shows that happiness is daily work. It's the combination of professionalism and humanity, knowledge and compassion, personal **ambitions and care for others.**

Here are a few ideas that can be applied in everyday family life:

Turn knowledge into help. Whether you're a teacher, doctor, lawyer, or engineer, think about how your skills can help those around you. Even a short consultation or a piece of advice can become a source of support for someone.

Support education. Help a neighbour with homework, start a book club for children in your neighbourhood, or support a local school project. Education is one of the key factors for long-term well-being.

Talk about difficult topics. Discuss news, history, and culture with your children. Explain that behind every statistic and headline are real people.

Do good deeds systematically. Instead of one-off actions, try to create a small tradition: help a neighbour once a month, collect items for those in need, or take part in volunteer activities.

Value your history. Share family stories with your children, explore the history of your city and country. A sense of roots gives inner strength.

Dr. Qandil reminds us that happiness is not a passive state – it's active creation. And each of us can contribute, using what we know and what we love.

Oksana Margiani

TRADITIONS AND MEANINGS

How Keepers of Crafts Weave the Fabric of Community Happiness

Over the years of conversations with remarkable people across different continents, we've come to understand that happiness rarely hides in grand declarations. It lives in quiet, unnoticed acts: in the way a grandmother teaches a child to knead dough; in the way a weaver selects threads that hold the memory of the desert; in the moment when a storyteller's voice falls silent at the end of a tale, and the whole village holds its breath. In this issue of the «Happiness Aggregator», we wanted to fill the pages with something truly fundamental: stories of people who carry traditions forward not as museum exhibits, but as a living, breathing practice. They pass on not just techniques, but values – care, respect, hospitality, and a sense of belonging. Through their hands and voices, we see what community happiness is really made of.

Australia: Songlines and the Dreamtime

Australia is home to one of the oldest continuous cultures in the world: the traditions of its Indigenous peoples, whose history spans more than 60,000 years. At the heart of these traditions is the Dreaming – a complex system of stories, songs, and knowledge that connects people to their land, their ancestors, and each other.

Songlines, or Dreamtime tracks, are a special form of storytelling that helps explain the structure of the landscape. They tell of the journeys of the ancestral spirit creators during the Dreamtime, weaving geographical information, moral guidelines, and ecological knowledge into melodic narratives. These songs can be sung over vast distances. Through Dreamtime stories, people learn not only about history but also about their responsibilities to family, homeland, and spirit. These stories teach the rules of life, provide moral guidance, and contain ecological knowledge that helps communities survive and thrive, often in harsh conditions.

The kinship system – a social structure far more complex than the genealogical trees familiar in the West – determines virtually everything: from marriage rules to resource distribution and childcare. As one elder put it, «Everyone has their place, and with that place come responsibilities to others». Here, happiness is not understood as personal satisfaction in isolation, but as the sense



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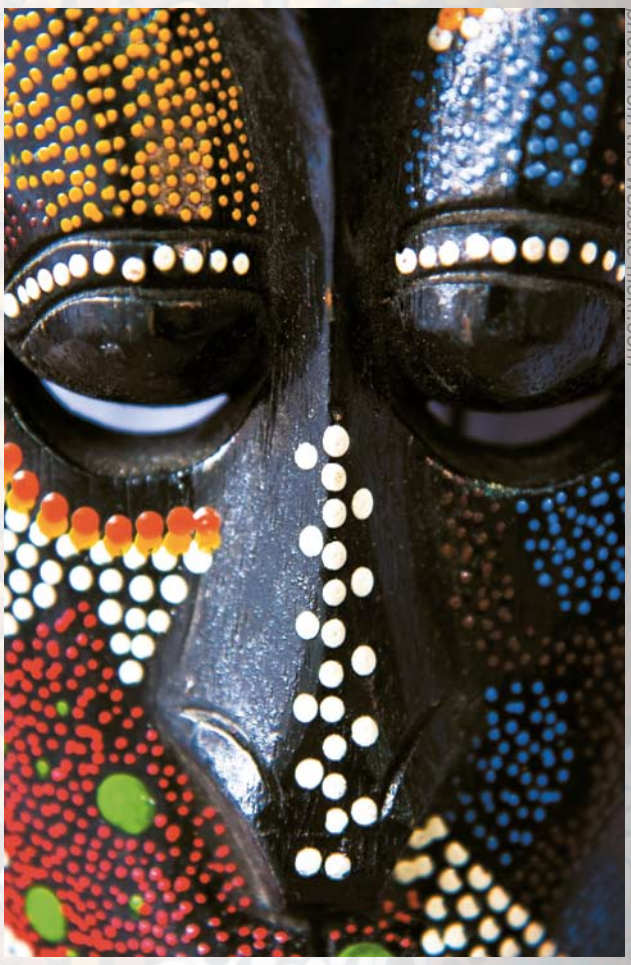


photo from the website flickr.com

experiencing of one's place within a web of relationships and obligations.

Dot painting, an iconic art form of Australia's Indigenous peoples, visually conveys Dreamtime stories through intricate symbols and layers of colour. Weaving – the making of baskets and other items from raffia and natural materials – connects families to generations of craftsmen. This is not just a hobby: it is an act of maintaining cultural continuity, a way to keep a conversation going that has lasted 60,000 years.

Convicts and settlers who arrived in Australia from the late 18th century brought their own stories: tales of bushrangers, goldfields, and the rugged beauty of the new land. These narratives merged with the continent's ancient traditions, creating a multilayered culture of storytelling where «stories are not just only entertainment – they are a cultural necessity».

> ***Through Dreamtime stories, people learn not only about history but also about their responsibilities to family, homeland, and spirit.***

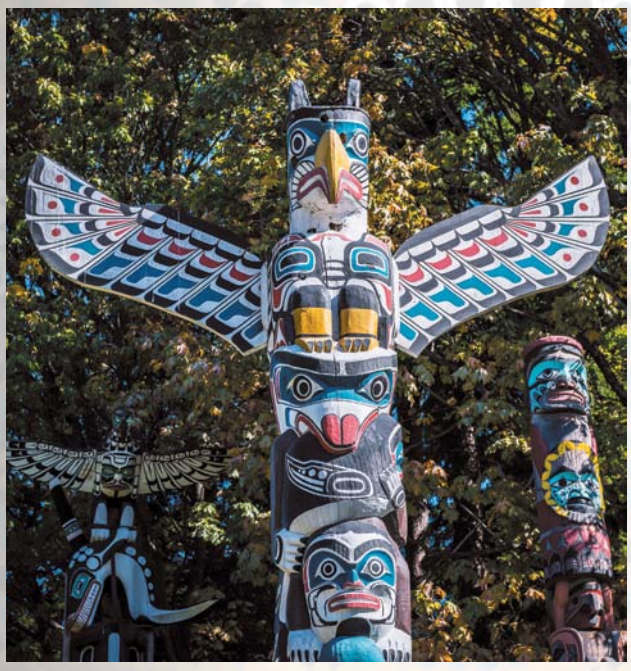
America: Appalachian Ballads and Crafts of Necessity

In the United States, folk art and traditional craftsmanship grew out of the practices of settlers who revived the artistic traditions of their homelands in a uniquely American way. In Appalachia, this took the form of ballads – songs passed down from generation to generation that do more than recount events: they convey the spirit of an era.

Appalachian ballads tell of love, betrayal, hardship, and triumph, painting a vivid picture of life in the mountains. The Appalachian storytelling tradition also includes «crankies» – illustrated scrolls that are hand-cranked in a specially designed box, combining visual art with oral storytelling. This fusion of image and voice creates a communal storytelling experience that unites people in a shared imagination.

American folk art – from quilting to carpentry – emerged from practical necessity but evolved into an expression of identity and a sense of belonging. Textile crafts, mostly done by women «for use, pleasure, and extra income», became a way to express individuality and creativity within everyday life. Quilting weaving in Appalachia was especially valued because it required the greatest skill and offered the most room for self-expression.





Today, there is growing recognition of traditional craftsmanship in America – a collective longing for quality, authenticity, and a deeper connection to creativity in a world dominated by mass production. Artisans who teach their craft to the younger generation reinforce the value of patience, precision, and dedication.

Today, there is growing recognition of traditional craftsmanship in America – a collective longing for quality, authenticity, and a deeper connection to creativity in a world dominated by mass production.

The Arab World: Threads That Carry the Desert

In Saudi Arabia, 2025 was declared the Year of Crafts – a national initiative to honour and preserve crafts that have evolved over centuries in different regions of the kingdom. From the Bedouin Sadu weaving in the central desert to the Al-Qatt Al-Asiri painting in the mountains of the southwest, these traditions are far more than decorative art. As one master craftsman put it, they are «a language without words»: passed from teacher to student, they carry values and collective memory.

Sadu weaving, included in the UNESCO list, originated among Bedouin tribes: women used wool from sheep, camels, and goats to create tents, cushions, and decorations. The patterns reflect the desert landscape and tribal symbols. Wool is dyed with natural ingredients from the desert – henna, turmeric. The entire process, from shearing to weaving, is a collective activity that connects generations of women.

In the Asir region, Al-Qatt Al-Asiri painting, which is more than 200 years old and also included in the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage list, is traditionally created by women to decorate the interiors of homes. The geometric patterns in bright, natural colours are



photo from the website flickr.com

> **The patterns reflect the desert landscape and tribal symbols. Wool is dyed with natural ingredients from the desert – henna, turmeric. The entire process, from shearing to weaving, is a collective activity that connects generations of women.**



Фото с сайта flickr.com

not just ornamentation – they express hospitality, a desire to make the home beautiful for family and guests. The act of painting itself is an act of care.

Palm-leaf weaving is one of the oldest crafts in Saudi Arabia. It began as a practical necessity: leaves were used to make trays for serving food, roofing materials, and baskets. Today, it is a form of cultural identity. But the core value remains the same: the craft is tied to gathering people, to shared meals, to creating objects that hold food and bring people together.

As Dr. Dalia Al-Yahya, head of the Crafts Sector at the Saudi Heritage Commission, noted, the main goal of preserving traditional crafts is «to strengthen citizens' identity and sense of belonging to the region». Belonging is the most fundamental ingredient of happiness.





Africa: The Voice of the Griot and the Weaver's Code

In West Africa, the griot tradition is one of the most remarkable systems for preserving culture. Griots are master storytellers, living encyclopedias who weave together tales of brave warriors, wise ancestors, and moral lessons. They serve simultaneously as historians, genealogists, musicians, and advisors. Their stories are not bedtime tales stories, but "vital historical records and guides to life: they teach everything from ethical behaviour to practical survival skills."

Across the continent, traditional crafts encode values just as powerfully as words. Ghana's kente cloth, with its intricate patterns and colours, conveys social status, political messages, and spiritual beliefs: «often, proverbs are encoded in the patterns». Among the Zulu and Ndebele in South Africa, beadwork is «its own language»: the patterns and colours communicate social standing, family status, or emotional messages. To wear or give a beaded item is to speak the language of care and intention.

The Maasai people of Kenya and Tanzania are renowned for their beaded jewellery, which indicates social status and personal achievements: «each colour and pattern carries specific meanings, turning these items from mere decoration into important cultural symbols».

African traditions also offer a profound lesson about community happiness. At the heart of many African cultures is a strong emphasis on communal life: collective farming, support networks in times of illness or loss, and festivals that bring people together to celebrate their shared heritage. As one observer writes, «African traditions are rich tapestries woven from threads of history, culture, and resilience». Here, happiness is not an individual pursuit, but something collectively woven – like the baskets in Rwanda and Uganda, where the very act of weaving together is an act of social cohesion.

"The Maasai people of Kenya and Tanzania are renowned for their beaded jewellery, which indicates social status and personal achievements: «each colour and pattern carries specific meanings, turning these items from mere decoration into important cultural symbols».

> *The Baul singers of Bengal, recognised as by UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage, are wandering minstrels whose songs carry moral lessons, local folklore, and spiritual insights. They sing of love, devotion, and transcending boundaries, offering not just only entertainment but a distinct worldview.*



India: Guru, Storyteller, and the Sacred Box

India is perhaps the most astonishing living library of oral storytelling traditions. Long before written texts appeared, knowledge, history, and moral philosophy were passed down from generation to generation orally, through storytellers, minstrels, and village narrators who sang their stories in courtyards and on temple grounds.

The Baul singers of Bengal, recognised by UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage, are wandering minstrels whose songs carry moral lessons, local folklore, and spiritual insights. They sing of love, devotion, and transcending boundaries, offering not just entertainment but a distinct worldview.

In Rajasthan, the Kawad tradition offers something uniquely powerful: a wooden box used for storytelling, painted with images of gods and heroes. It is carried by wandering storytellers – the Kawadia Bhats. The narrator opens panel after panel, recounting epics, genealogies, and folk tales. The Kawad is considered a sacred altar: listening to it is accompanied by rituals, offerings, and a sense of collective reverence. This is storytelling as a communal act, as identity-building, as the happiness that arises from listening together.

At the core of many Indian crafts and performance traditions lies the guru-shishya parampara – the "teacher-student" tradition. The student lives in the guru's home, observing and absorbing not only the technique but also "the unspoken spirit behind it." A sacred red thread is tied around the student's wrist – a symbol of the mutual vow to serve the art "with honesty and dedication." This is the transmission of something deeper than skill: it is the passing on of values, dedication, and the belief that one's work matters to the community and to those who came before.



photo from the website easy-peasy.ai

China: A New Life for Ancient Hands

In China, intangible cultural heritage crafts are experiencing a notable revival, largely thanks to young people. In 2025, the market volume for intangible heritage crafts reached 100 billion yuan, with more than 35,000 online sellers involved in this business. But there is more to it than the numbers.

Xu Wuxia, a bamboo-weaving artisan (born after 1990), created a bamboo lantern in the shape of a pony, which was featured at the 2026 CCTV Spring Festival Gala – and overnight, a centuries-old craft found itself at the centre of national attention. She founded a studio on the outskirts of Hangzhou, where she creates coasters, fans, jewellery, and lanterns – beautiful objects that bring ancient techniques into modern homes.

Li Shijie, founder of a silverware brand rooted in the blacksmithing craft of Heqing in Yunnan Province, beautifully captures the essence: «True commercialisation of intangible heritage is about revealing the human spark within the craft, turning its differences from industrial goods into a strength». The human spark – that is precisely what happiness is made of.

Liu Yaqing, a blogger known as Jiu Yue, has drawn huge attention by learning and showcasing dozens of traditional crafts: from molten-iron fireworks to Miao silver jewellery and shadow theatre. She is troubled by the lack of time: many elderly heritage masters may soon be gone. «If, thanks to my work, a craft becomes known, many will start practising it, and someone might even improve their life because of it – that is the real definition of a 'viral video'», she says. Her goal is not fame, but continuity: to ensure that the knowledge held by ageing hands reaches the next generation.

> *All this diversity of Russian craftsmanship is united by a principle articulated by the «Russian Seasons» brand: «Protecting traditions does not mean preserving them unchanged. No heritage can be saved without adapting to new realities».*



Russia: Blue Gzhel and Golden Lace of Filigree

Russian folk crafts are not merely aesthetic traditions – they are an expression of the people's relationship with their land, history, and one another. Gzhel is the distinctive blue-and-white ceramics from a region not far from Moscow; it has existed since the 14th century. Every teapot, every vase carries the quiet pride of craftsmen who learned from their parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents.

Kostroma filigree – the creation of openwork patterns from fine metal wire – is one of the most elegant Russian crafts, centred in the village of Krasnoe-na-Volge. Specialised schools and local enterprises preserve the tradition so that the «lace miracle in metal» continues to live.

Palekh miniature painting, with its vivid colours on black lacquered papier-mâché, depicts folk tales, literary plots, and historical scenes. Zhostovo painting transforms simple metal trays into blooming gardens. Khokhloma creates golden ornaments on wooden tableware – a craft so recognisable that it has become a visual symbol of Russian culture.

And then there is the matryoshka – the Russian wooden doll, which, whatever its exact origins, has become a symbol of generational continuity: each doll contains a smaller one inside, which in turn contains an even smaller one, all the way down to the tiniest «grain». Perhaps this is the most perfect metaphor for tradition: each generation gently holds the next, all the way to the smallest, most vulnerable, yet powerful core.

All this diversity of Russian craftsmanship is united by a principle articulated by the «Russian Seasons» brand: «Protecting traditions does not mean preserving them unchanged. No heritage can be saved without adapting to new realities». In other words, tradition is not a frozen artefact, but a living practice that evolves while preserving its core values.

What Keepers of Tradition Teach Us About Happiness

Looking across different continents, a common picture emerges. Where people practice traditional crafts, where elders tell stories to the young, where cooks pass on recipes that preserve the memory of a place and a people, happiness is understood as something collective, not solitary. It is found in the sense of belonging, in the exchange where you give something and receive something, in the awareness that you are part of a chain that stretches far beyond memory and extends forward, beyond your own lifetime.

The values embedded in these traditions are strikingly similar across cultures:

Care: for the materials, for the process, for the person for whom something is created.

Respect: for the elders who taught you, for the land that provides the resources, for the generations that will come after.

Hospitality: in a decorated home, in a shared meal, in an open door.

Belonging: the feeling that you are part of something greater than yourself.

Continuity: the confidence that what you create with your hands and voice will outlive you.

This is exactly what we at the Happiness Aggregator have been hearing for years from cultural figures, artisans, and community leaders. And this is what we want to convey: the conviction that happiness is not an abstract concept discussed in conference halls, but something that is lived and practised – in workshops, in kitchens, in village squares, in the space between storyteller and listener. Keepers of tradition do not talk about happiness – they practise it. And through their practice, they show us all what it looks like.

Media volunteers
of the "Invisible Wings" corps

THE MEANINGS OF FLIGHT:

Marc Chagall and Irina Markova-Chagall – a Dialogue Across a Century



Some names sound like music. The name of Marc Chagall is the melody of Vitebsk, Paris, and an eternal love for Bella. But what happens to this music when it is passed down through generations? Not as a score that must be played without mistakes, but as an echo that sounds in a new key each time. The story of Irina Markova-Chagall is not just a tale about the great-grandniece of a great artist. It is a profound exploration of how meanings transcend time, tragies, and geography.

The Sky of the Great Ancestor: Symbolism as a Way to Survive

Marc Chagall taught the world how to fly. His lovers soar above the houses, violinists balance on the ridges of rooftops, and animals engage in philosophical conversations. For the ordinary person, this is a fairy tale; for an art historian, it is avant-garde; but for Chagall himself, it was the only way to survive.

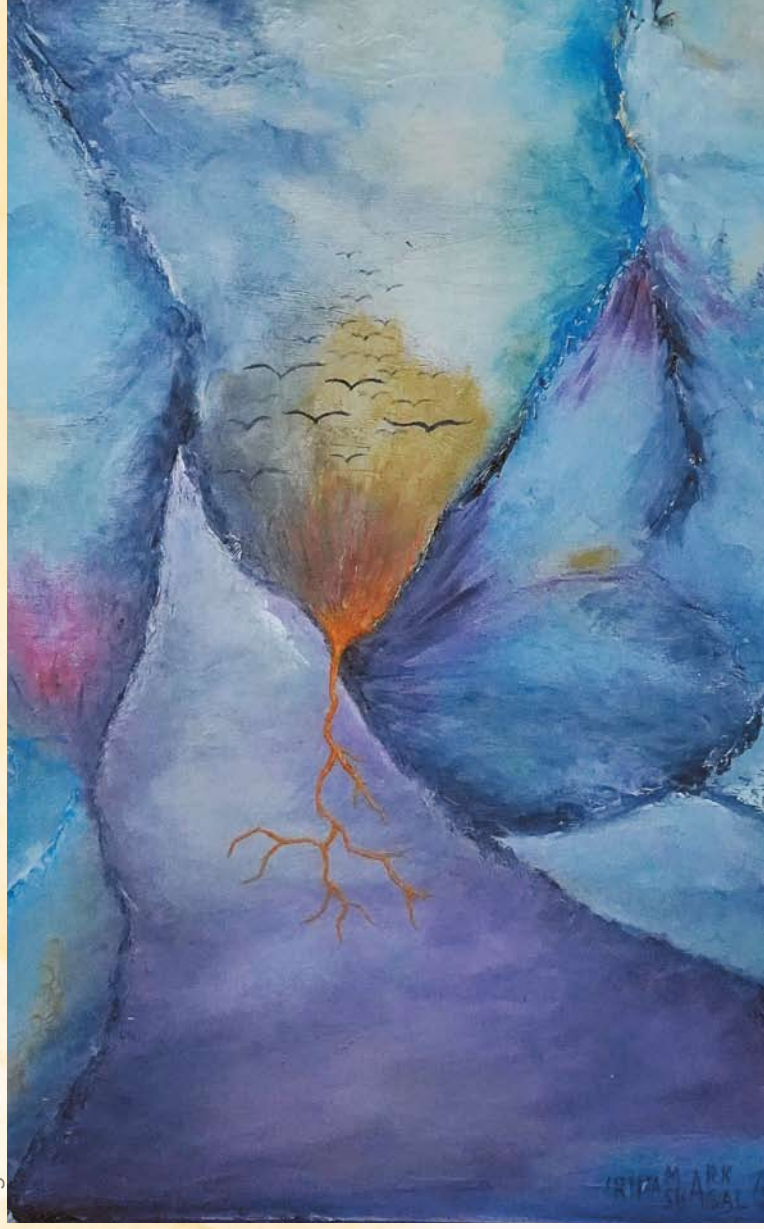
In a world where his people were being exterminated and empires were collapsing, flight became a metaphor for the freedom of the spirit. He took paints – the only reality that obeyed him unconditionally – and created his own Vitebsk. That very city he carried with him to France, Israel, and the USA. The meaning of Chagall's art is an affirmation of life in spite of death. When his muse, Bella, died, the world lost its colour, but the artist continued to paint, because stopping this inner flight would have been tantamount to destruction.

The Genes of Creativity: Physics Meets Lyricism

Irina Markova-Chagall came to the canvas at an age when most people are taking stock of their lives. At 58, while serving as a successful commercial director at the Financial and Industrial Corporation under the Government of the Saratov Region and going through a severe health crisis, she suddenly picked up a paintbrush. But the brush is not her main tool. Her true power lies in her fingers.

"I really do finish all my canvases with my fingers. I am sure this technique allows me to imbue the painting with a special energy that is transmitted through the hands."

Irina has a first degree in physics. She measured the aura of the hands and sought logic in chaos. But genes proved stronger than formulas. Genetic testing confirmed



Fragile World

> *Critics define her style as realistic symbolism. Like Marc Chagall, she does not paint "cheerful pictures just for the sake of a picture." Irina's works carry the same gentle sorrow, the burden of what she has lived through. The loss of her young son, the loss of her father – these wounds do not heal; they become golden threads in the fabric of her paintings.*



what her soul had already felt: an unbreakable connection with Mark Chagall. A single un-mutated gene became a bridge between the pragmatic 21st century and the romantic early 20th century.

Critics define her style as realistic symbolism. Like Marc Chagall, she does not paint "cheerful pictures just for the sake of a picture." Irina's works carry the same gentle sorrow, the burden of what she has lived through. The loss of her young son, the loss of her father – these wounds do not heal; they become golden threads in the fabric of her paintings. Her painting *Toss a Coin*, dedicated to her father, or the work where a swaddled baby appears in the sky instead of the moon – these are attempts to transform pain into light. This transformation of suffering into beauty is one of the core meanings of her art.

The Shadow of History: Why the Surname Became a Sentence

For Irina's family, the connection with the great artist was not a source of pride but a source of danger. An interview reveals a terrible truth:

"The connection with Marc Chagall was tragic for our family line. My grandfather was shot after Chagall obtained French citizenship in 1937. And my father, a half-year-old baby, became the son of an 'enemy of the people.'"

Irina's father, who was named after the artist, kept this secret his entire life. At the age of 80, he could not hold back tears when he received the document rehabilitating his own father. Irina started painting long before her father's death but did not show him her works. When she finally decided to, her father, seeing her paintings for the first time, seemed to release his own pain. He gave her words of guidance: *"Let Marc Chagall be your angel, and let your art be a true rehabilitation of your grandfather."*

When Irina moved to Israel at the insistence of her doctors (they gave her no more than a year to live due to severe asthma), the Holy Land gave her not only clean air but also a new right – the right to be heard. Today, her works are included in the collections of museums and private collections in Russia, the USA, Spain, Sweden, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Belarus. Over the years of her artistic career, Irina has held 35 world-class solo exhibitions, and her participation in Art Basel Miami Beach – one of the key platforms that define firt-line artists – became an important recognition of her place in world art.

> **In Irina's art, this principle takes on a modern tone: she creates images of Samarkand and the Western Wall, New York and London, Saint Petersburg and Moscow. For both artists, geography is not a boundary but a space of inspiration, and art always stands above politics.**



The Northern Lights

Aggregator of Meanings

What connects Marc Chagall and Irina, apart from their shared love for the colour purple, in which both loneliness and mysticism are hidden?

First and foremost – freedom from any constraints. Chagall boldly combined different worlds: in his canvases, a synagogue coexists with Christian subjects, the Kremlin with Paris. In Irina's art, this principle takes on a modern tone: she creates images of Samarkand and the Western Wall, New York and London, Saint Petersburg and Moscow. For both artists, geography is not a boundary but a space of inspiration, and art always stands above politics. Even the gargoyles of Notre-Dame Cathedral in their works seem to speak the same language – similar in essence, yet different in intonation.

Another shared trait is service to people. In difficult times, Marc Chagall did not stand aside: he raised funds to support those in need. Irina, acting as an ambassador for peace, collaborates with the UN and UNESCO and works with children. She sincerely believes that drawings by children from 70 countries – none of which contain a single negative subject – can influence even politicians and make the world a little kinder.

They are united by a philosophy of overcoming. It is the path of a person who has fallen more than once but has always found the strength to rise again. Only someone who has gone through falls can show this path to others. Both Marc and Irina embody this truth: their lives and art are not about flawless ease but about resilience, about the ability to return to the light again and again, despite all trials.

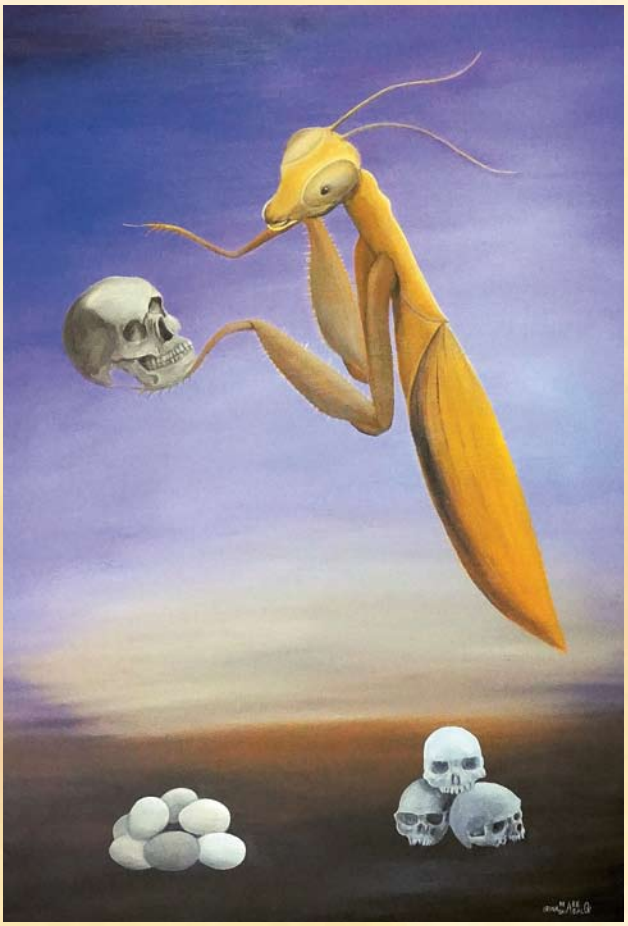
Instead of an Epilogue: The Formula of Happiness

In a world where success is increasingly measured by the number of likes and many actions are dictated by cold calculation, the story of Irina Markova-Chagall sounds like a deep, pure melody, impervious to fleeting fashions and in no need of noisy recognition. She is not trying to replicate the flight of her great relative: she does not need someone else's sky – she has built her own, with its own horizons and its own stars.

Her journey – from a commercial director in Saratov to an artist whose art is recognised worldwide – becomes living proof of a simple but important truth: it is never too late to pick up a brush or start painting with your fingers, as Irina does, to transform inner pain into a warm, healing light. In her canvases lives a special language – a language of subtle symbolism, gentle melancholy, and at the same time quiet, unyielding strength. These paintings do not shout; they softly remind us of what matters most: the meaning of life, the value of simple human feelings, and the fact that even in muted, sombre shades, one can always discern hope.

Irina's art is a kind of antidote to the hustle and bustle. It does not chase external effects; instead, it offers depth, sincerity, and inner work. That is why her art resonates in the most diverse corners of the planet: the need for truth and emotional warmth is universal and understandable to everyone, regardless of language or culture.

The key concept in this philosophy becomes Irina's own words – a life credo that remarkably echoes the worldview of her great ancestor and reveals the very



The Mantis's Smile

> **Irina's art is a kind of antidote to the hustle and bustle. It does not chase external effects; instead, it offers depth, sincerity, and inner work. That is why her art resonates in the most diverse corners of the planet: the need for truth and emotional warmth is universal and understandable to everyone, regardless of language or culture.**

essence of how culture can "aggregate" happiness: *"My credo is to do good and throw it into the sea. To expect a reward for good deeds is already selfishness."* This selflessness is where the true magic lies: in serving beauty, in carefully passing on meanings to future generations – through painting, through children's festivals, through simple but important encounters between people.

The happiness of Marc Chagall and Irina Markova-Chagall is not a random gift of fate but the result of a daily, sometimes very difficult choice. A choice to get up after falling, to pick up the paints again, and to continue painting the world as they wish to see it: free, loving, and flying.

"Together with my colleagues, we are laying a solid foundation for future achievements," Irina emphasises, "and we do this not through loud slogans but through daily, meaningful work. Our baton is passed from hand to hand through culture, art, and sport – fields that speak the universal language of human feelings and meanings. At the core of everything we do lie simple but profound values: respect, mutual aid, the desire to create and share goodness. These are the anchor points in any times, and they unite people across borders, languages, and traditions. We consciously join our efforts so that our impulse grows stronger and our circle of influence becomes wider. Our goal is not just to do important work but to carry these values further, reaching more and more corners of the world. Because when people feel they are part of a single movement, real power is born: the power of unity and shared goodness."

Irina does not merely share her conviction; she invites others to collaborate, genuinely believing in the future of a great common cause: "I am sure that the international festival The World Paints Happiness will soon become a global event and will be heard from every corner of the world." And in this belief lies another part of the formula of happiness: not to withdraw into oneself but to cast one's goodness into the sea of human hearts, knowing that the waves will surely carry it to new shores.

Marusya Barinova



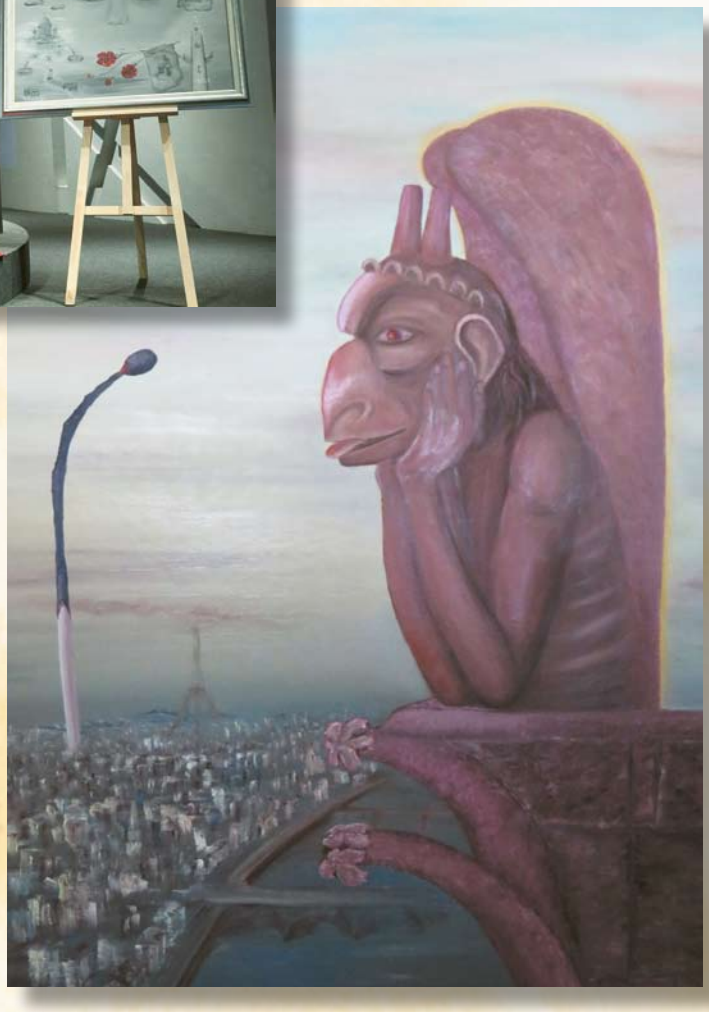
The Vodovzvodnaya Tower of the Kremlin in Reflection

Presentation of the painting «The Candle of Memory» to the Governor of Saint Petersburg, A.D. Beglov, to be donated to the «State Memorial Museum of the Defense and Siege of Leningrad.»





The Jellyfish



The Wise Gargoyle



PETRA:

Happiness Carved in Stone

Speed, comfort, the number of notifications on the screen – we've grown used to looking for happiness in external attributes. But true meaning always lies deeper, in places where time flows differently. To understand this, we need to travel to the heart of Jordan, to a city that wasn't built from bricks but was born from the earth itself.



> *The rock yields to the chisel not through force, but through persistence. Millions of strikes with a tiny hammer-chisel transform a shapeless block into the elegant façade of Al-Khazneh. In the same way, the human soul is shaped not by great upheavals, but by thousands of small choices, kind deeds, and moments of awareness. A person's happiness is like the architecture of Petra – it is built from the inside out.*

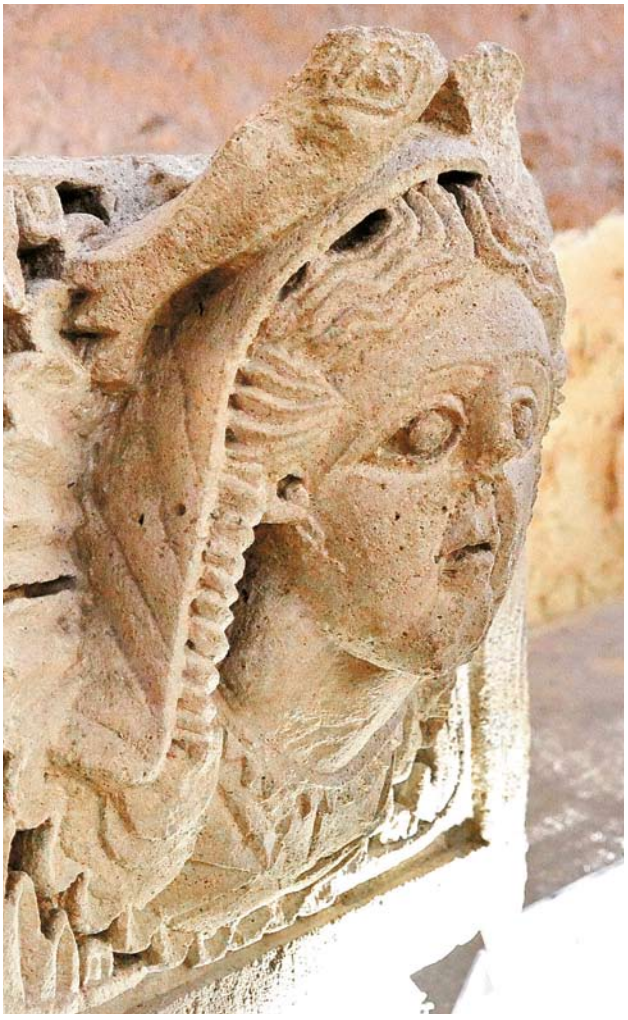
A Human Like a Rock, and a Rock Like a Human

At first glance, the pink sandstone of the city of Petra seems to symbolize indestructibility. It stood here for millions of years before us and will stand long after. We, on the other hand, are fragile; we are finite. But if you look more closely, it is precisely the stone that teaches us real resilience.

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The Nabateans were an ancient semi-nomadic Semitic people who created a powerful kingdom in the desert and semi-desert regions of what is now Jordan, Israel, Syria, and Saudi Arabia. These people built their tombs and temples by chiselling away the excess from
the stone. And that is our task too: to chip away the excess from ourselves – the hustle, the fear, the anxiety about the future. What remains is only the essence. Only the light.

> The city of Petra survived in one of the world's most merciless deserts not because it had high walls, but because it had water. Its system of dams and canals required the work of every resident. It was an act of shared trust and creation. When one person makes sure the other has water, civilization emerges.





History as a Mirror of Humanity

Why do we need to know about the Nabataeans today? Why remember those who vanished fifteen hundred years ago? Because history is the key to understanding the world. When we look at the colonnaded streets and Byzantine churches amid the desert, we don't see dead ruins. We see a universal formula for civilization:

- seeking resources (water and trade routes);
- creating beauty despite harsh conditions;
- dialogue between cultures (here, the Edomites, Nabataeans, Romans, and Byzantines mingled).

The people who lived on this land loved, traded, lost loved ones, and gazed at the same stars we do. By studying their traces, we realize that humanity is united in its aspirations. Borders fade, empires crumble, and all that remains is the thirst for life and the need to leave something beautiful behind.



Understanding this past heals us of our fear of the present.

The Foundation of Humanity

What is the foundation of any society? Walls? Laws? The economy? No. That foundation has always been, and always will be, collective happiness – the ability of people to unite around a common goal.

The city of Petra survived in one of the world's most merciless deserts not because it had high walls, but because it had water. Its system of dams and canals required the work of every resident. It was an act of shared trust and creation. When one person makes sure the other has water, civilization emerges.

Happiness is that invisible mortar that binds the stones of our world together. Without it, any structure will crumble at the first earthquake. The Nabataeans disappeared as a political entity when trade routes changed, but they remain in eternity because they managed to turn bare rock into a hymn to beauty. They left us a message: the point is not to own the world, but to make it a little more beautiful with our own hands.

The Practice of Presence

When you find yourself in the Siq gorge, stop. Feel the coolness of the shade and the heat of the sun on your shoulders. Look up. You'll realize that happiness is not a destination at the end of a long hike to the Ad-Deir monastery. It happens right now: in the sound of your footsteps on the gravel, in the smell of dust after a rare rain, in the awareness that you are part of this endless story.

Petra reminds us: we too are made of stardust and earthly dust. And as long as we are capable of feeling awe in the face of beauty – be it an ancient temple or a stranger's smile – humanity stands on the strongest possible foundation.

Media volunteers of the "Invisible Wings" corps

THE SECRET OF THE SOUND MAP:

How to Listen and Really Hear the Music of Happiness

Music is a language that needs no translation. It speaks to everyone: to the child who hears the flute's trills for the first time, to the elderly person who recogniszes in a melody the echoes of their youth, to a resident of a bustling metropolis, and to someone living in a quiet village at the foot of the mountains. We decided to talk about how music becomes a conduit for happiness and how contemporary composers and musicians create this bridge between cultures and generations.



When we talk about happiness in music, many imagine something bright, major-key, and simple. But happiness comes in many forms, doesn't it?

Amir (Iran), composer: Absolutely. Happiness is not just joy – it's also peace, a sense of belonging, and a memory that warms you from the inside. In the Eastern musical tradition, the mode itself carries an emotional code: one scale evokes the feeling of dawn, another – a quiet sadness that can also be luminous. I try not to "translate" the tradition into the familiar European tonality but to preserve its breath while adding modern textures: electronics, unusual percussion, spatial effects. This creates a dialogue of eras: the past doesn't freeze in a museum but enters into a living conversation with today.

So, you're not mixing styles for the sake of exoticism but looking for points of contact between meanings?

Amir (Iran), composer: Exactly. For example, in one piece, I combined the sound of the duduk – an instrument often associated with a deep, "earthy" intonation – with minimalist electronics and a string quartet. The duduk sings of memory, of roots, and of the warmth of home. The strings add a sense of moving forward, while the electronics create the space of the future. For me, the happiness here lies in the fact that none of these lines overpowers the other: they coexist like different voices in a large family.

How do listeners perceive such a synthesis? After all, not everyone is used to unusual combinations.

Lia (Japan), musician: At first, there can be wariness. But music works more subtly than words: it doesn't demand that you understand everything right away; it invites you to feel. I often start a performance with a very simple, almost lullaby-like motif on the koto – a Japanese stringed instrument. It sounds recogniszable and gentle, giving a point of reference. Then I gradually add other layers: percussion, voice, modern rhythms.



> Happiness is not just joy – it's also peace, a sense of belonging, and a memory that warms you from the inside. In the Eastern musical tradition, the mode itself carries an emotional code: one scale evokes the feeling of dawn, another – a quiet sadness that can also be luminous.

> An orchestra is like a city where every instrument has its own voice and role. My task isn't to make everyone sound the same but to build a balance so that each voice can be heard. For example, when we include folk wind or percussion instruments in the score, they may sound unusual to a classical ear.



And I see the tension fade: people start breathing in time with the music, someone smiles, someone closes their eyes. That's the moment of happiness – when you stop being an "outsider" and become part of a shared breath.

You're talking about a moment. But is there something in such music that stays with a person for a long time?

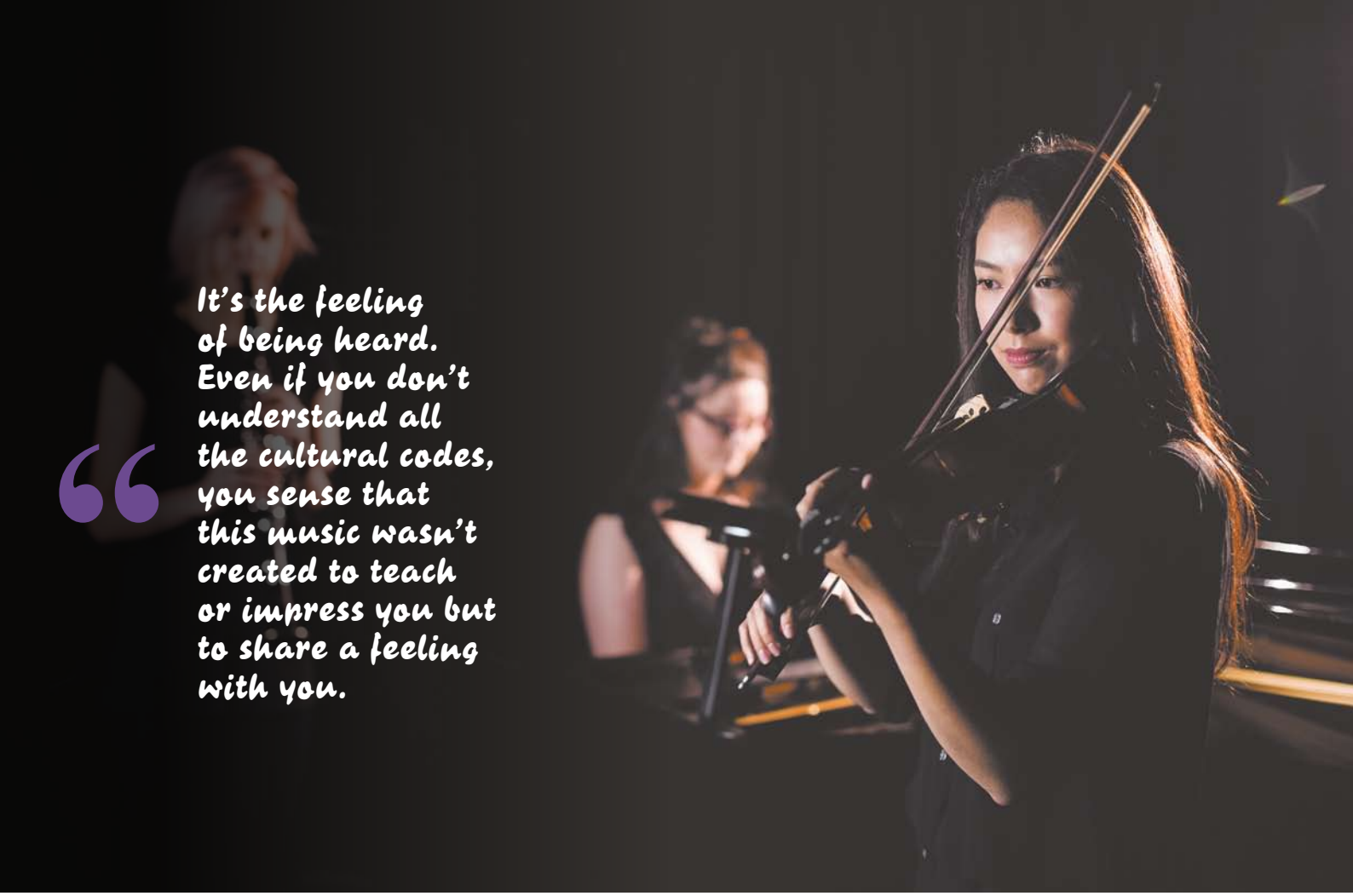
Lia (Japan), musician: Yes. It's the feeling of being heard. Even if you don't understand all the cultural codes, you sense that this music wasn't created to teach or impress you but to share a feeling with you. And when you hear a familiar motif in a complex score, even in a new guise, it's like meeting an old friend in a new city. The joy of recognition is also a form of happiness.

Orchestral music is already a collective statement and a different scale. How do you preserve that human intonation in a large ensemble?

Elena (Russia), conductor and arranger: An orchestra is like a city where every instrument has its own voice and role. My task isn't to make everyone sound the same but to build a balance so that each voice can be heard. For example, when we include folk wind or percussion instruments in the score, they may sound unusual to a classical ear. But it's precisely this «unfamiliarity» that makes the music alive. I try to ensure that the climax isn't just about volume but about clarity – so that a person can pick out one line for themselves, whether it's a violin, a flute, or a drum, and say, «That's about me». Happiness in music is when you find your own voice in the overall flow and realisze that it belongs there.

So, happiness in this kind of music is about both belonging and individuality at the same time?

Elena (Russia), conductor and arranger: Yes. And also about trust. The composer's trust in the listener: «I won't simplify; I'll show the complexity but make it accessible». The musicians' trust in each other: «We may make mistakes, but we'll listen». And the listener's trust in themselves: «I have the right to feel what I feel, even if I don't know all the terms».



> *It's the feeling of being heard. Even if you don't understand all the cultural codes, you sense that this music wasn't created to teach or impress you but to share a feeling with you.*

What advice would you give to someone who says, «I don't know much about music; I'm afraid I won't understand it»?

Amir (Iran), composer: Don't try to understand. Try to hear. Close your eyes for a minute and simply notice what resonates in your body in this music? Lightness, warmth, a tingling sensation, a desire to move, or, conversely, complete inner stillness? That is your language of happiness. After that, you can learn names, styles, and instruments, but the starting point is always this personal response.

Lia (Japan), musician: And don't be afraid to return to the same piece. Music reveals itself in layers. The first time you notice the rhythm, the second time the melody, the third time some quiet instrument in the background. It's like walking through your favourite park at different times of year: each time you see something new, but the feeling of home remains.

Elena (Russia), conductor and arranger: And remember: music doesn't have to be "correct." It has to be real. And the real always finds a way to the heart.

If you could describe the music of happiness in one sentence, what would it be?

Amir (Iran), composer: The music of happiness is when the past embraces the future, and you stand between them and feel that you are in the right place.

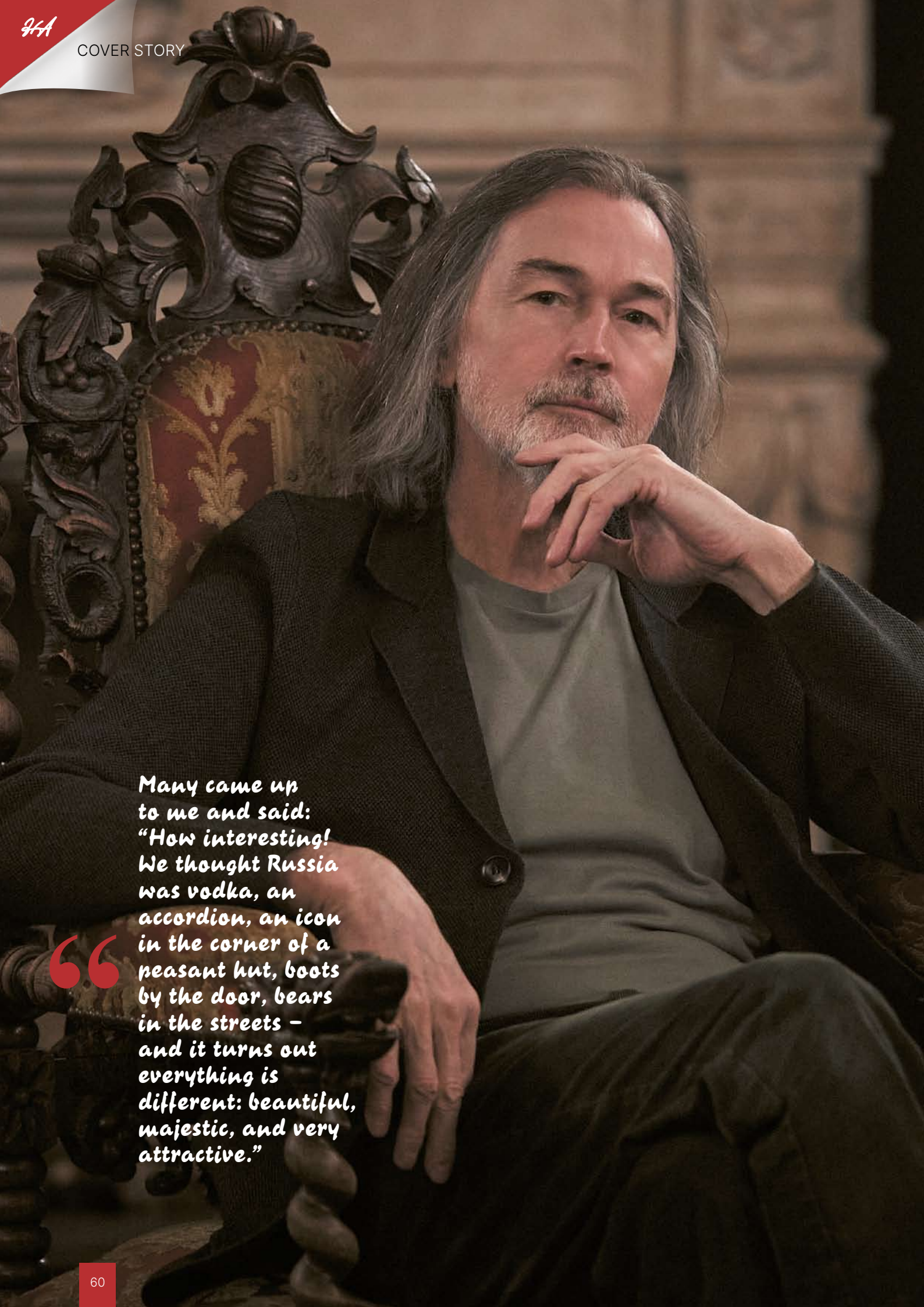
Lia (Japan), musician: It's when you hear an unfamiliar instrument and suddenly realize: "I know this. It's about me."

Elena (Russia), conductor and arranger: It's when, in a huge hall, you feel that someone is playing just for you and you're not alone.

Music as a universal language of happiness works exactly like this: it doesn't erase differences but makes them valuable. Eastern modes and modern forms, folk instruments and orchestral power – all of these are different shades of the same feeling. And every person, young and old, anywhere in the world, can find something of their own in this sound.

What music makes you happy? Share your stories, and we'll create a new happiness map from them, where favorite melodies will stand in for cities, and the rhythms that lead home will stand in for roads.

Media volunteers of the "Invisible Wings" corps



> Many came up to me and said: "How interesting! We thought Russia was vodka, an accordion, an icon in the corner of a peasant hut, boots by the door, bears in the streets – and it turns out everything is different: beautiful, majestic, and very attractive."



Nikas Safronov: “ART BELONGS TO THE CATEGORY OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS”

The Artist’s Role in the Concept of “Cultural Sovereignty”

Some people need no introduction – and Nikas Safronov is certainly one of them. A People’s Artist of Russia, he holds a vast number of ranks, titles, and positions. His works are held in leading Russian museums: the Hermitage, the Tretyakov Gallery, the Russian Museum, and the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts. Safronov is best known primarily as a portrait painter. His sitters have included politicians Vladimir Putin, Alexander Lukashenko, Mikhail Gorbachev, and Boris Yeltsin; Russian and international stars Nikita Mikhalkov, Philipp Kirkorov, Sophia Loren, Ornella Muti, Monica Bellucci, Mick Jagger, and Jean-Paul Belmondo. The artist calls his signature style Dream Vision (“a vision in a dream”), in which reality and fantasy intertwine.

Safronov has held hundreds of solo exhibitions in Russia and abroad. In 2025, after a meeting with Pope Francis, he announced a large-scale international project in the field of cultural diplomacy: as part of it, Dream Vision exhibitions were held in India and became the most visited cultural event in the country over the past sixty years.



Diptych, left part. "Pragmatic Dialogue – the Path to a Stable Future."



"With Thoughtsof Moscow."

On Multifaceted Creativity and the Cultural Code

Nikas Stepanovich, your work spans many directions – from classical portraiture to the Dream Vision style. How does the Russian cultural code manifest itself in this diversity?

When an artist conceives a painting and then works on it, he does not think in such categories; he does not reflect on them. As I understand it, a code is a complex system of stable values, symbols, behavioral models, and unwritten rules that are passed down from generation to generation and shape the collective consciousness of a people. The cultural code is a kind of "mental DNA" that largely determines people's reactions, expectations, and actions, often on a subconscious level. It is precisely language, traditions, values, norms, and much else besides.

It seems to me that for a Russian person this code, along with other components, includes faith in miracles and a desire to help one's neighbor. Andrei Bitov has a wonderful phrase: "the eternal anxiety of the Russian person about the fate of the Tower of Pisa." That is very accurate. Much in our country may tilt and even fall apart, but we are troubled by the fate of a tower in a distant Italian city. Or Mikhail Svetlov: "I left my hut and went off to fight so that the peasants of Grenada could have the land." That is truly our code, our soul. Our code is also an orientation toward the past or the future and a rather dismissive attitude toward the present.

In my paintings, both those done in the surrealist genre and those in the Dream Vision style, all of this is present in one form or another: the combination of the incompatible, the absence of boundaries between dream and reality, illusion and actuality.

Your works are known far beyond Russia. Do you consider yourself an ambassador of Russian culture?

Objectively, it may be that I am perceived as such in other countries. But in reality it looks different: at an exhibition opening there are a certain number of officials, sometimes friends, invited critics, and the press. Everyone says something, sometimes calls me an ambassador, an envoy of culture, and so on. But the main thing happens later. Hundreds

and thousands of people come, look at the paintings, buy catalogues, and through painting learn much about Russia, its beauty and grandeur. Some begin planning a trip to Russia; some begin reading books about our country. That is the main thing.

I should say that my paintings perform another important task. They break down stereotypes that have become entrenched in the minds of ordinary foreign viewers. Many know about our country from local sources: the media, books by authors who are not always friendly to us, and so on. Many came up to me and said: "How interesting! We thought Russia was vodka, an accordion, an icon in the corner of a peasant hut, boots by the door, bears in the streets – and it turns out everything is different: beautiful, majestic, and very attractive."



Diptych, right part. "Pragmatic Dialogue – the Path to a Stable Future."

In one interview you mentioned the great Russian masters Aivazovsky, Dostoevsky, and Tchaikovsky. Which of them became your main teacher in understanding what a creator's happiness is?

The list of people who influenced me could go on for a very long time, and it includes not only our compatriots. I would not single out just one. Every artist is, of course, a creator, as they say, by the grace of God. On the other hand, he is a person whose life cannot always serve as a model. Aivazovsky, for example, signed his students' paintings, which made the paintings many times more expensive; he also sold blank canvases bearing only his signature. Today there are many works on the market about which it is unclear whether they are genuine canvases by the master or whether only his signature is genuine. Dostoevsky gambled, was constantly in debt, and often created his great works under great pressure from deadlines, debts, and so on.

Strange as it may seem, Jack London had a great influence on me. He was a sailor, and I wanted to become a sailor. He tried many professions, which is familiar to me too. I worked as a watchman, wrote posters, sold things, and so on. But one day Jack London realized that literary work was a good way both to create and to earn a living. He wrote 2,000 words every morning and sent them to a publisher or editorial office. He wrote nothing more until the next morning. It is no secret that he bought plots for his stories for a few dollars. The main thing is that it is



"Meetingof Friends in Moscow."

impossible to tear yourself away from anything he wrote. He never spoke about inspiration. Two thousand words in the morning, and that's it! It was precisely from his example that I understood that creativity is work; inspiration is born in the process of work, and mastery is also developed through work. In the end, some feeling arises – perhaps of happiness.

Advice to Readers and a Formula for Happiness

Many young people today seek quick paths to success using neural networks and technology. What advice would you give to a beginning artist or any person seeking their path: where should one look for true inspiration in the era of digital noise?

Neural networks and digital technologies are a new reality, a kind of challenge that is sometimes presented as a kind of conflict between traditional and contemporary art. In essence there is no conflict, since on one side of the barrier is creativity, and on the other is anything but that. I once read somewhere that there is authorial creativity and reproductive creativity. That is a kind of oxymoron – a combination of the incompatible, like fried ice, a cheerful corpse, and so on. Either it is creativity, or it is copying, reproduction – but that is no longer creativity.

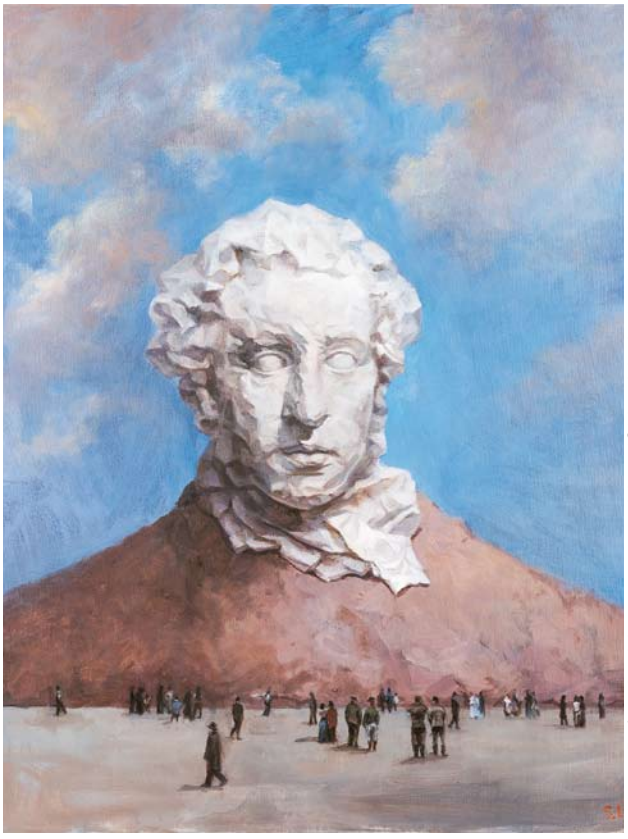
Modern technologies are capable of creating the illusion of creativity. You can ask AI to paint a picture in the style of Velázquez, Modigliani, or, for example, Nikas Safronov, and the computer will do it. You can even ask AI to make a mix of these artists' work. And the machine will do it. But it will be a fake. In the same way, CNC machines cut wooden reliefs wonderfully, any paintings in 3D, even icons. But these are dead fakes; there is no artist in them, no soul. Icons were painted



"VladimirRegion. Golden Autumn."



"MininandPozharsky."



I Have Raised a Monument to Myself Not Made by Hands."

strictly according to canon, but the soul and spirit of the master remained in them, which is why Andrei Rublev's Trinity still touches our souls after centuries. And digital noise really is noise. In one African country I heard a proverb: "An empty cart makes a lot of noise." That, in my opinion, is precisely said. The noise will pass, but creativity and mastery will remain.

Do you have a personal formula for happiness that you could pass on to readers of our magazine as a key to inner harmony?

I do not possess a formula for happiness. But in Arkady Gaidar's story Chuk and Gek there is a passage that, it seems, offers a certain key to this question. "What happiness is – everyone understood in their own way. But together people knew and understood that one must live honestly, work hard, and love deeply and protect this vast happy land, which is called the Soviet country." The country is no longer Soviet, but it is still our country, and things here are not simple; such is its fate. But the conditions for finding inner harmony exist here; one only needs to understand and use these conditions correctly.

You said that the viewer is the main consumer of creativity. How can an ordinary person learn to see beauty in everyday life and become a co-creator of their own happiness?

Indeed, the viewer is the main consumer of creativity – or, more precisely, of its products. But one is not born a viewer; one becomes one. This must begin in childhood: with music and drawing lessons, with visits to museums and exhibitions, with classes in clubs, art schools, and studios. Communication with art must become a habit, an integral component of a person's life. Imagine, several of my paintings have been in space aboard an orbital station, and cosmonauts said that they needed paintings no less than air, food, and water. It would be good to see such a situation on Earth over time.

Love for the Motherland and Transmitting It Through Art

The theme of love for the Motherland runs through many of your canvases. How has your perception of Russia changed over the years of your work, and why is it so important right now to speak about patriotism in the language of art?

Love for the Motherland is one of the most intimate human feelings. Love for a woman is different: this love can be expressed, demonstrated; it comes and goes. But love for the Motherland is built into your blood, your brain, your consciousness and subconscious. It seems to me that people who often and loudly declare that they love the Motherland are not entirely sincere. To put it politely. The Special Military Operation (SVO) has revealed the true attitudes of many pseudo-patriots, among whom a very considerable percentage are precisely people of art.

To speak about patriotism in the language of art, in particular painting, is both simple and difficult. Simple, because the Motherland is beautiful – its nature, people, cities, villages. I never tire of painting landscapes of Moscow and St. Petersburg, faces of compatriots – and not only famous people, but everyone who has seemed interesting to me from a painterly point of view. And difficult, because these paintings must contain love and reverence. Alexei Kondratyevich Savrasov repeated to his students: "Without air, a landscape is not a landscape! No matter how many birches or firs you plant in a landscape, whatever you invent, if you do not paint the air, then the landscape is rubbish." It seems to me that these words can be used here with a slight correction. Without love, any thrice-patriotic painting will move no one. And today this is important, not only because the SVO is ongoing, but also because during the years of perestroika and liberal reforms this issue was neglected, and a generation has grown up that is often lacking in patriotism. Meanwhile, art belongs to the category of strategic communications. It is the sphere of the state's actions to educate its citizens, to promote its interests abroad, and so on.

You mentioned that Pope Francis spoke out against the cancellation of Russian culture. How can an artist defend the cultural sovereignty of his country not with slogans, but with brush and paints?

Cultural sovereignty is precisely what is defended by strategic communications. An artist can continue and develop the traditions of artistic creativity that carry the values of national culture. But he can also reproduce in his work artistic models that implement foreign cultural values. And in culture, as history has shown, you are either a donor (that is, you promote your culture) or a recipient (that is, you accept someone else's culture). There is no third option. Multiculturalism was invented precisely to mask expansion in the sphere of dialogue of cultures.

Generally, this is an interesting topic. Traditional values are at the core of culture and exist in the form of various products of cultural activity by their creators – books, plays, paintings, musical works, and so on. All of this is the result of objectification, which is expressed in the transition of the creator's understanding and experience of the meaning of certain values into a work of culture. De-objectification is the transformation of values as objective and spiritual forms of culture into the content of a person's inner world and then into his experiences and activity.

A change in the core of culture is the replacement of one culture by another, that is, of the culture of the recipient by the culture of the donor. This is nothing other than the loss of national culture. We observe something similar in the culture of small ethnic groups. If this culture is not protected, it changes and approaches the culture of the "big brother," with corresponding losses. In other words, the concept of "cultural sovereignty" stands for a great deal, and the artist's role here is far from insignificant.

Personal and Eternal

You are always demanding of yourself and rarely satisfied with the result. Is this dissatisfaction the engine of your happiness or its constant trial?

A very interesting question. Satisfaction does happen, and not that rarely. For example, when a person is pleased with a portrait, and most importantly, when his loved ones say that this is exactly what he is like in life, in everyday life – and I was the first to see it. As for dissatisfaction, everything is not simple there either. I have said more than once in interviews that I always pray when I begin a new painting. This is not a canonical prayer, but a request to God for help. In response, He sends me intuition, which I fully trust – it determines almost everything in my work, and in life too. But there is never any certainty that I have understood and grasped everything



A Scene from an Unwritten Novel, or a Dialogue with the Past, 2026

correctly in this divine revelation. Hence the dissatisfaction. But hence also the desire to work further.

In conclusion: what does it mean to be a People's Artist of Russia today? Is it a privilege, a duty, or the highest form of service to the Fatherland and to people's happiness?

It is all of these and much more. When at official events the host, before inviting me onto the stage, announces my ranks, titles, and positions, I recall an anecdote I heard in Spain. A late guest, a representative of a noble family, returns to a hotel at night; the porter is dozing in the lobby and asks, "Who is coming?" The guest replies, "Juan Antonio Maria de la Costa Victor Enrique di Saavedra." The sleepy porter replies: "All right, all right, just let the last of you close the front door behind you." So it is with titles and positions. The point is not in them or in their number. They signify certain stages in a biography and impose a mass of duties and a constant expectation from the audience of some miracle from the holder of these titles. This is probably happiness, but it is a difficult happiness.

Marina Volkova



Fortune's Knight, Bathed in Light, 2026



THE MEANINGS AND TRADITIONS OF FLAVOURS:

The Multifaceted Face of Gastronomy



«...In the cups, with a dark stream,
The fragrant tea was already flowing,
And the boy was serving the cream...»

Even Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin did not overlook the magic of food. There are eight gastronomic episodes in Eugene Onegin. And this is no coincidence: food is a source of pleasure that leaves no one indifferent. We may relish the sophistication of flavours, but we derive no less pleasure from the memories and meanings evoked by scents, presentation, or the dish itself. Pushkin had a favourite dish – pink blini (pancakes) baked for him by his nanny. For the poet, they became a symbol of love and care.

The Code of the Concept

The term «gastronomy» comes from the Greek gaster (stomach) and nomos (law). It is believed that the term was introduced by the French poet Joseph de Berchoux, who in 1801 published a humorous poem titled La Gastronomie, which enjoyed great success.

Leonid Gelibterman, Ambassador of Taste for World Gastronomy and President of the International Enogastronomic Centre, notes that gastronomy is, on the one hand, the ability to discern flavours, to understand the subtleties of culinary art, and to master the craft of cooking. On the other hand, it is closely linked to the social sciences.

Names Etched in Flavour

Gastronomy has a talent for immortalising names – and it does so with grace.



Margherita: a pizza in the colours of the flag

According to legend, in 1889, a Neapolitan pizzaiolo prepared a pizza for Queen Margherita of Savoy. She arranged the toppings in the colours of the Italian flag: red tomato, white mozzarella, and green basil. The queen loved it. Thus, a simple dish became a symbol of national unity.

Carpaccio: Painting On A Plate

In 1950, Countess Amalia Nani Mocenigo complained to the legendary Italian chef and restaurateur Giuseppe Cipriani that doctors had forbidden her to eat cooked meat subjected to heat treatment. Cipriani went to the kitchen, took a piece of marbled beef, sliced it into translucent strips, drizzled it with sauce, and served it to the countess.

The dish got its name in honour of the painter Vittore Carpaccio, whose exhibition was on display at the time. The artist had a fondness for red and white. This colour combination reminded the restaurateur of the mix of red meat and white sauce. So, culinary art reached out to painting.

A Dessert in Honour of a Ballerina

The Pavlova dessert is considered a classic of world cuisine. It was named after the great Russian ballerina Anna Pavlova, who visited Australia in the late 1920s. He saw a resemblance between the delicate meringue and Anna's ballet tutu. Thus, the dessert became a tribute to the admiration of ballet.

> “According to legend, in 1889, a Neapolitan pizzaiolo prepared a pizza for Queen Margherita of Savoy. He arranged the toppings in the colours of the Italian flag: red tomato, white mozzarella, and green basil. The queen loved it. Thus, a simple dish became a symbol of national unity.

Literature on a Plate

While European gastronomy immortalised the names of royalty and artists, Russian cuisine found inspiration in literature.

Marina Tsvetaeva's Apple Pie

It is hard to imagine the poetess in an apron in the kitchen. Yet, a mention of an apple-and-sour-cream pie appears in her sister's memoirs. Sisters Marina and Nastya Tsvetaeva served it to their guests at their dacha in Tarusa. Today, the Tsvetaeva pie has become the main gastronomic symbol of the town – a keeper of the memory of poetic inspiration.

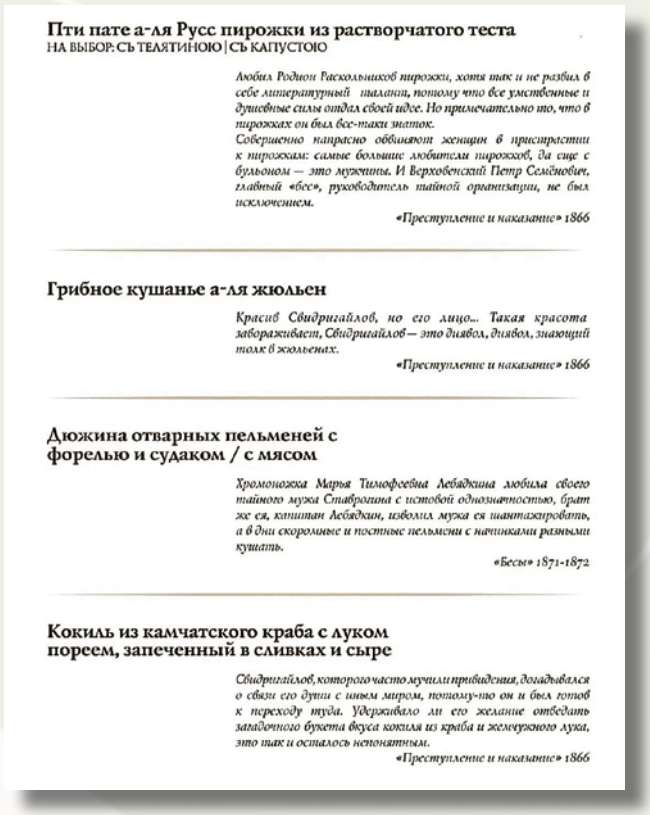
Pancakes according to Chekhov



There is a Russian cuisine restaurant in Kolomna where blini are baked in a traditional oven. They are served according to the instructions left by Anton Pavlovich Chekhov himself in his short story «On Transience»:

«He drenched them with hot butter. Then, as if whetting his appetite and savouring the anticipation, he slowly and deliberately spread caviar over them. He covered the spots where the caviar hadn't reached with sour cream... After thinking for a moment, he placed the fattest piece of salmon, a sprat, and a sardine on the blini, and then, trembling with delight and nearly out of breath, he rolled both blini into a tube...»





Пти пате а-ля Русс пирожки из растворчатого теста
НА ВЫБОР: СЪ ТЕЛЯТИНОЮ | СЪ КАПУСТОЮ

Любил Родион Раскольников пирожки, хотя так и не развил в себе литературный талант, потому что все умственные и душевные силы ондал своей идее. Но примечательно то, что в пирожках он был все-таки знаток.
Совершенно напрасно обвиняют женщин в пристрастии к пирожкам: самые большие любители пирожков, да еще с бульоном — это мужчины. И Верховенский Петр Семёнович, главный «бес», руководитель тайной организации, не был исключением.

«Преступление и наказание» 1866

Грибное кушанье а-ля жюльен

Красив Свидригайлов, но его лицо... Такая красота завораживает, Свидригайлов — это дьявол, дьявол, знающий толк в жюльенах.

«Преступление и наказание» 1866

Дюжина отварных пельменей с форелью и судаком / с мясом

Хромоножка Марья Тимофеевна Лебядкина любила своего тайного мужа Ставрогина с истовой однозначностью, брат же ея, капитан Лебядкин, изволил мужа ея шантажировать, а в дни скоромные и постные пельмени с начинками разными кушать.

«Бесы» 1871-1872

Кокиль из камчатского краба с луком пореем, запеченный в сливках и сыре

Свидригайлов, которого часто мучили привидения, догадывался о связи его души с иным миром, потому-то он и был готов к переходу туда. Удерживало ли его желание отведать загадочного букета вкуса кокиля из краба и жемчужного лука, это так и осталось непонятным.

«Преступление и наказание» 1866

St. Petersburg: a gastronomic quote book

Dinners in the mesmerising city of St. Petersburg turn into journeys through time – filled with stories and references to literary works. For example, in a restaurant dedicated to Fyodor Dostoevsky, the menu is designed as a gastronomic quotation book from his books. Each item is accompanied by an excerpt from a novel. Here, you can try the cabbage soup from *Crime and Punishment*, filet à la Stroganoff from *The Idiot*, or steamed from *The Brothers Karamazovs*.

National Features of Gastronomy

The cuisines of the world's peoples have evolved over centuries, becoming a reflection of each nation's philosophy, traditions, and way of life. The choice of ingredients,



their seasonal use, and cooking methods literally allow you to recognise the «taste of a territory». And memory, preserved «on the tip of the tongue», inevitably reveals happy recollections of encounters with national culinary traits.

The Russian Spirit of Tradition and Coziness

Dishes of Russian cuisine are often made from simple and readily available ingredients, but this in no way diminishes their flavour. Family traditions are highly valued here, and the cuisine reflects the country's climatic specifics.

The Cult of Soups. Hearty first courses have always been an excellent way to feed a large family efficiently and to warm up during the cold months.

The Sacredness of Bread. A symbol of prosperity and hospitality, bread has long been the main source of energy and an attribute of rituals. For example, the wedding loaf (karavai) carries special meaning as an embodiment of fertility and family warmth.

The Art of Fermentation. Pickling and soaking allowed people to preserve vitamins in vegetables and mushrooms throughout the winter.

Ritual Practices. Many dishes in Russian cuisine have ritual origins and significance. For instance, kurnik – a multi-layered pie with



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various fillings – was traditionally prepared for weddings to wish the newlyweds happiness and prosperity; it served as a kind of culinary talisman for the young family. Kutya is still prepared for Christmas and Kolyada carols, as well as for memorial meals. And what would Maslenitsa be without pancakes?

The Chinese Language of Balance

In China, gastronomy has always been built around the pursuit of balance in flavours, colours, and aromas. It is important for a dish to combine sour and sweet, salty and bitter, soft and crispy, hot and cold.

The Symbolism of Ingredients

Fish symbolises abundance, which is why it is commonly found on the festive table.

Peking duck is a symbol of wealth and prosperity.

Noodles represent strong bonds between family and friends; that is why it is important for them to remain long and unbroken during cooking.

The colour palette in Chinese culinary art also carries meaning: red stands for happiness and good fortune, green for health and harmony, and yellow for wealth and power.

Japanese Aesthetics and Philosophy

A distinctive feature of Japanese gastronomy is the emphasis on the freshness of ingredients, the balance of flavours, and the aesthetic presentation of dishes.

The Concept of Shun. This involves using seasonal ingredients at the peak of their ripeness.

Philosophy of Minimal Intervention. Japanese food philosophy aims to preserve the natural taste of the product, avoid overloading it with spices, and not mask its texture.

Aesthetics of Presentation. The visual arrangement of Japanese dishes is as much a part of the dining experience as the taste itself.

Ritual Aspects. Japanese cuisine is closely linked to national holidays and religious rites, reflecting seasonal changes and cultural values. For example, New Year's dishes (osechi ryori) are prepared in advance and include symbolic ingredients.

Italian Simplicity and Freshness

The philosophy of Italian cooking is all about freshness and simplicity: the fewer the ingredients, the purer the flavour.



Seasonality. Italian gastronomy adheres to the principle of seasonality, using ingredients that are at their best at a particular time of year.

Respect for Tradition. Many recipes and cooking techniques are passed down from generation to generation, preserving authentic flavours and historical value.

The Importance of Family Meals. Italians attach special significance to lunch, when family members gather to enjoy food, share news, and strengthen their bonds.

Regional Differences. Each region of Italy has its own unique set of ingredients and dishes, reflecting local traditions and cultural influences. For example, the north favours butter, meat, and cheeses; the central regions are known for aromatic herbs and soups; and the south is famous for tomatoes, fish, and olive oil.

«We are what we eat», the ancient Greek healer and philosopher Hippocrates once said. Believing that food not only satisfies hunger but also affects a person's health and consciousness, he essentially affirmed that we create our own state of happiness – through the choices we make, who we choose to be, where and with whom we spend our time, what we do, what we eat, and, most importantly, the meaning we invest in all of this.

Olga Pavlenko, Crimea





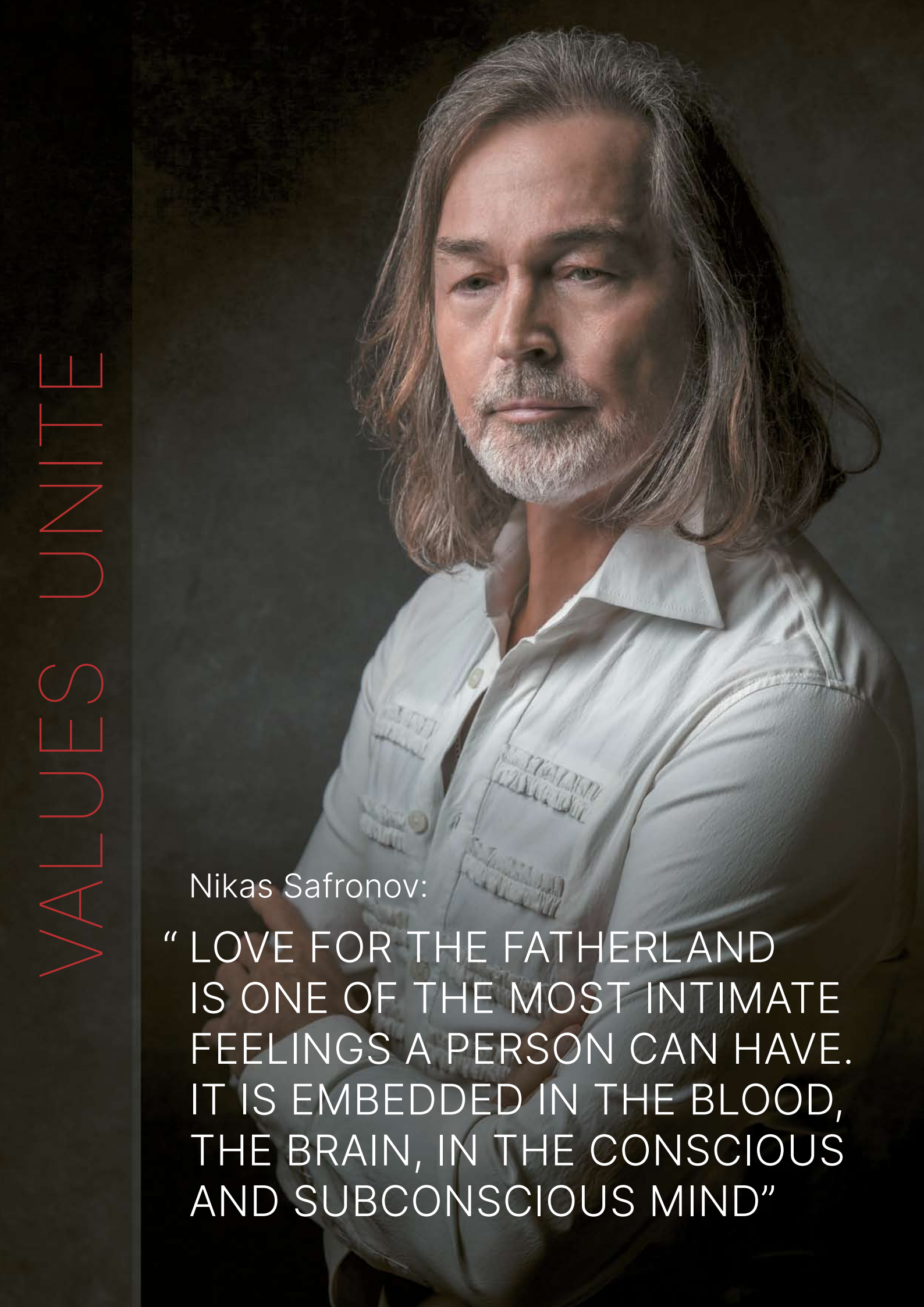
The pages of our magazine are filled with the remarkable illustrations of the Arab artist Abbas Al-Musawi from Bahrain. His vivid and spiritual paintings are imbued with light; they are full of life-giving energy and literally embody the state of happiness.

***Abbas Al-Musawi** is a professional artist with more than forty years of experience. In 1991, he founded the Art & Peace Project. He honed his craft under the guidance of the Bahraini artist Dr Ahmed Baker. Later, while studying in Cairo, he became fascinated by the Impressionist style of Sabri Ragheb, whom he still regards as the "prince of painting." The main sources of inspiration for his works have been the old market of Manama, its suburbs, and the surrounding villages. These canvases clearly show the influence of Bahrain, which, both literally and figuratively, infuses colour into his abstract works. In October 2026, the artist's exhibition opened in Saint Petersburg (Russia).*



Painting by Abbas Al-Musawi

VALUES UNITE



Nikas Safronov:

“ LOVE FOR THE FATHERLAND IS ONE OF THE MOST INTIMATE FEELINGS A PERSON CAN HAVE. IT IS EMBEDDED IN THE BLOOD, THE BRAIN, IN THE CONSCIOUS AND SUBCONSCIOUS MIND”