**THE KHERSON ART MUSEUM NAMED AFTER OLEKSIY SHOVKUNENKO**

**Rendered by *Mikhaylo Mikhaylets, October 2016 – May 2017***

***Self-edited***

The Kherson Art Museum was opened in 1978 – just before the bicentenary of the city. In 1981, it was named after an established countryman, the people’s artist, a full member of the Academy of Sciences Professor Oleksiy Shovkunenko (1884-1974). The building of the museum was erected in 1905-1906 upon the project of the architect from Odessa Adolf Minkus. Initially, this building was intended to be the city hall.

The history of the museum began with a small number of icons and ancient paintings which constituted the collection arranged in 1890 by a public man and archeologist Victor Goshkevich. This collection belonged to the archaeological museum located in the building of the modern Kherson Regional State Administration of Culture and Tourism.

Later, in 1912, The Museum of Fine Arts started its work in the same building. It was opened owing to Mykola Herdroyts, a famous man of art supported by an established painter Illia Repin who highly appreciated the cultural work of this artist. Also, Mykola Herdroyts kept touch with The St. Petersburg Academy that supplied The Fine Arts Museum with sculptures, graphical and ornamental-applied works. In addition, over seventy works of art were sent by independent artists: the pictures by Volodymyr Makovsky, Sergiy Yegornov, the sculptures by Boris Edwards were among them.

Because the archeological and the art museums were both located in the same building, the decision was made to join them, which was officially confirmed on the cusp of 1922 and 1923. In 1978, the art collection was moved to the building of the former city hall where it is located now.

The main attraction of the Art Museum is the exhibition of the paintings by Oleksiy Shovkunenko. After the artist’s death, his wife Oleksandra Shovkunenko handed them on to the museum in 1981. She transferred over seventy pictures. Among them were *‘The Azovstal’, ‘The Florists’, ‘The Portrait of the Pilot Kalenichenko’* and many more. That is when the museum was named after Oleksiy Shovkunenko.

One of the most important and striking exhibitions in the museum showed the works by Mikhailo Vrubel in 2016. Among his 12 exhibited works were ‘*The Sea King’* (two sculptures), ‘*Sadko with the Gusli’, ‘Lel’, ‘Kupava’, ‘Volhova’* and others. However, only three works by this sculptor belong to the permanent collection of the museum.

You can also see the pictures by the Russian artist Kostyantyn Korovin whose oeuvre is represented by his sketch for the opera *‘The Little Humpbacked Horse’* (‘*Koniok-Gorbunok’*); there is the work by the painter Mykhailo Zhuk called “*The Tale: Bugs’ Reel*” and what not.

More than 20 temporary exhibitions devoted to different men of art are usually open in the museum. For example, Georgiy Kurnakov’s (1887-1977) paintings were exhibited in 2017 – this distinguished man of art was born in Mariupol, lived and worked in Kherson; Vadym Fedorovich’s sculptures were shown in 2016 (Vadym Fedorovich was born in 1953, is famous under the pseudonym ‘Feofan’, lives in Oleshky [former Tsiurupinsk]).

The museum glorifies the famous Khersonite Oleksiy Shovkunenko: it is named after him and has a lot of his paintings in its permanent collection. There are also paintings by famous Ukrainian and Russian men of art, such as Illia Repin, Mykola Skadovskiy, Mykola Pymonenko, Kostyantyn Korovin and others.The collection of the Kherson Art Museum grows every year and becomes more and more interesting. The building of the museum itself is an important architectural monument protected by the law. This place is designed to transmit the memory of the past to the future generations and foster respect for cultural values.

**Based on:**

1. *Корсакова Л.І. Скарби музеїв України / Корсакова Л.І. – Київ: Мистецтво, 1987.*
2. *Алеферко С. Херсонскийхудожественный музей им.А.А.Шовкуненко / Алеферко С. – Херсон: Наддніпряночка, 2009. – 172 с.*

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