

Andronov, Nikolai

1929 - 1998

In the Banya (Dyptich - self portrait with wife).

Oil on board
100 x 50cm (each)
1995



Signed

PROVENANCE:

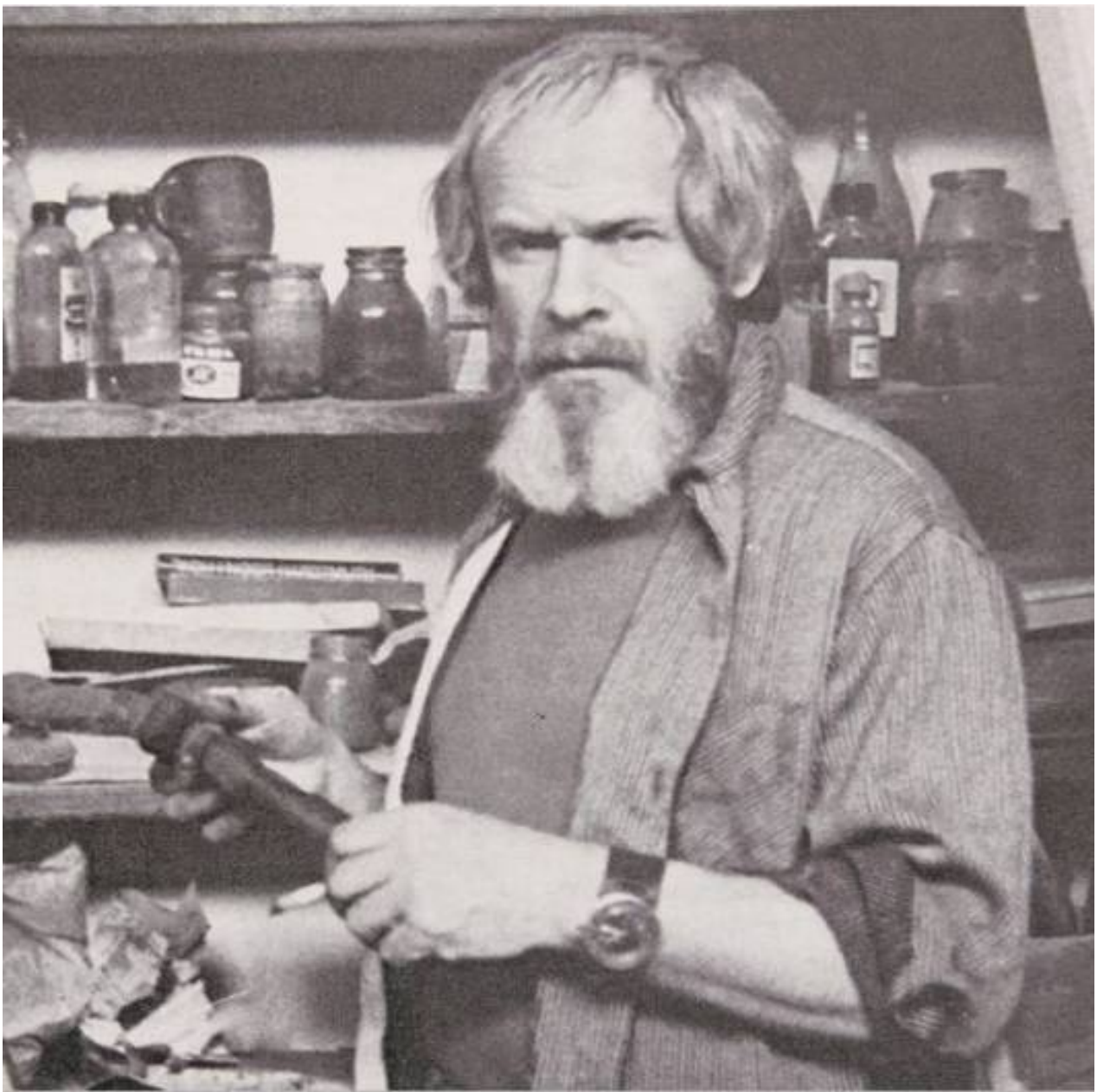
Collection of the artist and by descent

EXHIBITED:

The Museum of Architecture in Moscow (MUAR), 'Russia Andronova,' June 2009, dedicated to the 80th anniversary of Andronov.

LITERATURE:

Certificate from the artist's daughter



Nikolai Andronov in his Moscow studio circa 1970

In the Banya is an important large-scale Dyptich by the leading post-war 'Severe Style' Moscow artist,

Nikolai Andronov. Two panels depict the same scene in reverse. The artist sits in the sauna looking up at his wife. All non-essentials are eliminated from the painting so the viewer just focuses on the figures.

Andronov was born in Moscow in 1929 and graduated from the Surikov institute in 1954. Stalin's death on March 5, 1953 marked the beginning of a new direction for Soviet painting and the emergence of a new style known today as the 'Severe Style' or the 'Severe School' of which Andronov was a founding member. Nikita Khrushchev came to power and delivered his so-called 'Secret Speech,' in which he denounced Stalin's cult of personality and the brutality of his reign. This instigated the period now known as the 'thaw' that allowed increased freedoms in many areas of Soviet life including artistic production.

In the early 1950's and after Stalin's death and the 'thaw,' exhibitions of Western art came to Russia for the first time including shows of international contemporary art, Picasso and Abstract Expressionism. Nikolai Andronov, along with artists such as Geli Korzhev, Viktor Popkov, Pavel Nikonov, Pyotr Ossovski, Victor Ivanov and Tair Salahov rejected the happy cheerful subject matter of Socialist Realism and drew upon Soviet art of the 1920's for inspiration and created the 'Severe Style.' They abandoned the polished classical style that was fashionable at the time and practised by artists such as Aleksandr Laktianov and presented a subject matter that they felt better reflected the grim austerity of post war Russia. Monumental paintings by Andronov, Korzhev, Popkov and Salahov used subjects drawn from daily life with simplified form, colour and a dramatic cinematic manner.



Raftsmen, 1961, Nikolai Andronov, Tretyakov gallery.

Andronov's paintings are characterized by: - a sense of truthfulness, grittiness and aloofness. The paintings are often on a large scale which led to the 'Severe Style's' alternative name of Monumentalism. Andronov utilized a simple palette of muddied greys, browns and earth tones often making his own colours by necessity when in the villages in the far north of Russia.

The artist travelled around Russia drawing his subject matter from the reality he encountered. He admired the leading 1930's artists such as Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin, Alexander Deineka and Yuri Pimenov and the

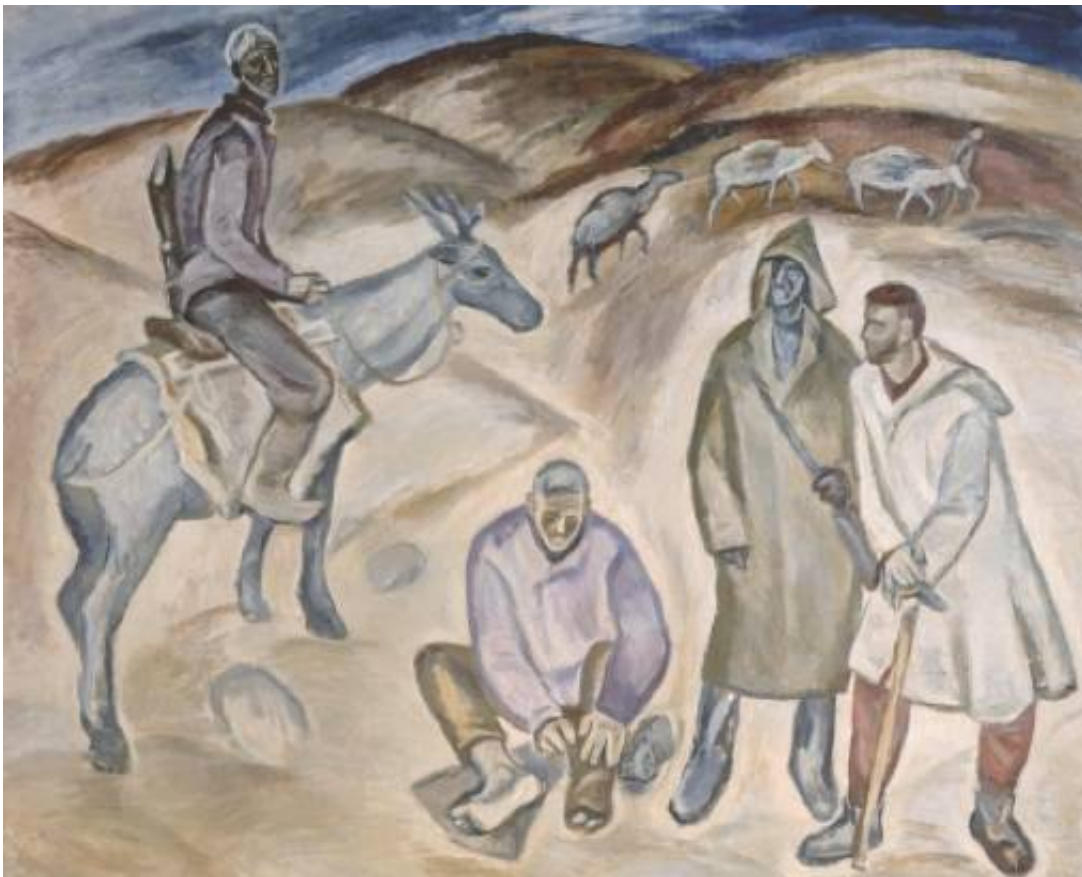
Italian Neo-Realist cinema. The polished perfection of the artists of the early 1950's was replaced with broad brush strokes and a sketchy rough quality.

Andronov started his art studies at a young age at the Intermediate Art School, later finishing his studies at both the Repin Institute (1948-1952) and the Surikov Institute (1952-1954). He began exhibiting his art in Moscow in 1951, where he became a member of Group of Eight, a political activist group. He specialized in thematic paintings, portraits and landscapes.

Andonov's most well-known works include *Builders of Kuibyshev Hydroelectric Power-Station* (1957) and *A Rigger* (1959). *The Assembler* (1958), and *Raftsmen*, (1961) became definitive works of the Severe style. Later in his life, Andronov would find inspiration in Ferapontovo on the Little Volga where he worked in a summer studio. The paintings of this period show the dynamic, harsh, tense reality of the Russian north.

In the 60s and 70s, Andronov worked mainly as a muralist painter designing huge murals and mosaics, such as *Man and Printing* (1978) for which he was awarded the USSR State Prize in 1979. Moving into the 1980s and 1990s, political motivations gave way to more spiritual impulses, shifting the themes of his paintings more toward religious cultural heritage and spiritual self-examination. Andronov continued painting up until the very last year of his life.

Other famous paintings of this school are Pavel Nikonov's *Geologists* of 1962 and Viktor Popkov's *Memories, Widows* of 1962 and Victor Ivanov's *Funeral* of 1971.



Pavel Nikonov, *Geologists*, 1969, oil on canvas, 182 x 225cm.

The Tretyakov Gallery in Krymski Val now has two rooms dedicated to this period where masterpieces

by Popkov, Korzhev, Andronov, Nikonov and Ivanov can be seen.



Viktor Popkov, *Memories, Widows,* 1962, oil on canvas, 160 x 234cm.



Victor Ivanov, *Funeral,* 1971, oil on canvas, 153 x 218cm

Paintings by Andronov are well represented in Russian museums with examples in: - The Tretyakov Gallery, The Russian Museum, The Museums of Fine Art in Omsk and Arkhangelsk, The Abramtsevo Estate, Rostov, Novgorod, Vologda, Kiev, and many museums in Germany and Eastern Europe.