

KENSINGTON & CHELSEA

REVIEW



left to right: *Lusja with Tulips*, 1967, oil on canvas, 101.6 x 81.3 cm; *Space and Landscape*, 1994, oil on canvas, 121.9 x 91.4cm

Oleg Vassiliev

Widely known as one of the leading figures of the Soviet Non-Conformist Art Movement (the “unofficial” Russian Art Movement) originating in the late 1960s, Oleg Vassiliev is regarded as one of the most significant Russian artists of his generation. Sadly Oleg passed away earlier this year, but his legacy as a pioneering artist will not be forgotten

Vassiliev's artistic visions were in constant opposition to the ideologies of State-endorsed Socialist Realism. Instead, Vassiliev's paintings have been known for their inimitable quality of uniting the formalist innovations of the early 20th Century Russian avant-garde with the humanity, lyricism and realism characteristic of Russian painting of the 19th Century. In essence, what Vassiliev did was to return to the image a visual narrative – his paintings communicate impressions, memories and recollections through an exploration of light and space.

By extracting, elevating and transforming a personal,

intimate selection of visual images from both past and present, Vassiliev captures something more universal, something common to all human memory. In pictorial form, the artist creates an analogy of the very process by which memories become incorporated into the mind's consciousness; the viewer sees memory as a landscape:

“Memory is capricious in its choice of subjects. Often, one recalls something quite unimportant; at first glance, it seems incomprehensible why memory retains some things and lets others go. Apparently, it is not a matter of the event or the

object. Most likely, these have been preserved in an incidental way, immersed in the stream of light that saturates the past. That light is the very essence of remembrance... The deeper one delves into the past, the more powerful the stream of light. And somewhere over there, beyond the boundaries of the discernable, it turns into a river of golden light. In that river my life drowns, and everything that was before lives.”

– Oleg Vassiliev, *On Memory*, May 1980

Oleg Vassiliev: Paintings 1967–2013 runs until December 21st at Faggionato