

ALGIRDAS PETRULIS- MEMORIES OF MOSHE ROSENTHALIS

So this is the story I'm about to tell you. I was an instructor at the Art Academy and Moshe was a student of mine. I remember him well as a good, respectable person. We got along very well. He and Stauskas were both on the front (frantavikai). Stauskas was in Japan when the war ended and I'm not sure about Rosenthal. I know that he was in the 16th Lithuanian division. Others loved talking about their bravery during the war and considered themselves heroes. Rosenthal used to wave his hand and say, "You try to protect your hide and remain alive." He used to enjoy joking with people. A modest, honorable man. Stauskas studied with Rosenthal and was invited to Tel Aviv. Upon his return, Stauskas said:

-Listen, I visited with Moshe. Mail him a catalog of your work. He would love to have a copy. I sent him a copy and received Rosenthal's. So interesting. More importantly, the text! Written in Lithuanian and with a drawing!

Dear Algirdas Petrulis,
Warmest greetings from under the skies of Tel Aviv.
I just received your book and it was truly a feast!
You are one of the best painters in Lithuania.
Your paintings are lyrical and aesthetic,
full of love and a fabulous poet,
musician and the most gentle person.
I wish you health, strength
and all that is good. Be happy!
Respectfully yours,
M. Rosenthal
26.II.2002.
Tel Aviv

What a text! Maybe it was too nice!

We got along very well. I just watched the movie about Moshe. So well-filmed showing him painting, his studio. After all these years I saw him again. I regret not seeing him when he was in Vilnius.

Some years back I participated in a small co-op that was organized by the artist Mergašilskis (who also emigrated through Poland like Moshe did). Students had difficulty selling their pieces, and were quite poor. So, when furniture was being sent to Byelorussia from Lithuania, students used to add a painting in order to make some extra money. Rosenthal belonged to that co-op. He suggested that artists make a copy of a really good piece, and not to send the original. He said that the recipients wouldn't value the work anyway. Some artists were jealous and used to say that only the Jewish artists got orders. That was not true. I used to work there also. I painted well over ten paintings. To earn a little bit of money back then was a big deal.

I remember Moshe's diploma piece very well. The prisoners are being released. Paleckis walks in.. Very well done.

He was a good student, an outstanding artist and a very respectable person. .

I recently read a quote by Seneca:

„Life is valued not by its length, but by its content.

Vilnius, October 2008