

**ERNST NEIZVESTNY, A SCULPTOR,
ENGAGING IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF ART**¹**V.L. Glazirin,**

arhiglaz@gmail.com, ORCID: 0000-0003-4057-7384

¹**S.S. Storozhuk,**

mesvet@ukr.net, ORCID: 0000-0001-8390-7190,

¹**N.V. Dubinina,**

naty.dubinina83@ukr.net, ORCID: 0000-0002-3250-9528,

¹*Odessa State Academy of Civil Engineering and Architecture, Ukraine*

Abstract. The article is devoted to the outstanding world-famous sculptor, engaging in the philosophy of art, Ernst Neizvestny, who represents a monumental synthesis of the Russian avant-garde of Kandinsky, Malevich, Tatlin and Filonov. His works carry in itself a unique combination of the ideas of East and West and embodies the concept of synthesis of arts, the monumental style of sculpture and graphics, integrating the spiritual content and modern forms, the vision of the world as harmony and freedom – all this is symbolically expressed in the drawings, graphics, sculpture and monuments of Neizvestny. Among his works, well-known works are considered to be the monumental compositions “A Tree of Life” and “A Golden Child” in Odesa.

His creative path and life are studied in the article: childhood and youth in the USSR, participation in the Great Patriotic War, fame and criticism at home, emigration to the USA (1976), and also worldwide recognition. His works compose the collections of many of the world's leading museums such as the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Museum of Modern Art in Paris, the Contemporary Museum in Stockholm, the Museum of Modern Art in Belgrade and the Kennedy Centre in Washington. Ernst Neizvestny is the author of essays, memoirs, was engaged in poetic creativity; read lectures at the largest universities in the world, the topics of his lectures are: “Art and Freedom”, “Art and Society”, “Dante and Dostoevskiy”. He was an honorary member of the Swedish Academy of Sciences, New York Academy of Sciences and Arts, European Academy of Arts and Sciences and Humanities.

The fate and works of Ernst Neizvestny became the subject of many books, articles and films (Alexander Zinoviev's story “Yawning Heights”, the documentary film “One Day of Truth”, based on the Nobel lecture of Alexander Solzhenitsyn).

Keywords: Ernst Neizvestny, a sculptor, A Tree of Life, A Golden Child.

Introduction. An outstanding world-famous sculptor, engaged in the philosophy of art, Ernst Neizvestny presents a monumental synthesis of the Russian avant-garde of Kandinskiy, Malevich, Tatlin and Filonov. The works of this world-famous Russian-American artist and philosopher carry in itself a unique combination of the ideas of East and West and embodies the concept of the synthesis of arts. Among his works are such well-known works as the “Blooming Lotus”, a monument erected on the top of Aswan Dam in Egypt; 150-meter monument in the pioneer camp “Artek” in the Crimea; a monument to Nikita Khrushchev; the crucifix in the Vatican Museum; the Bust of Dmitri Shostakovich at the Kennedy Centre; the composition of the tribes of Israel and the monumental composition “A Tree of Life”. The project of “A new Statue of Freedom” in China and the installation of a memorial complex to the victims of fascism in Riga, “The Memorial to Stalin’s Victims” in Sverdlovsk, Vorkuta, Magadan etc. also belong to Neizvestny [1].

Analysis of recent research and publications. Ernst Neizvestny is a world famous sculptor, whose works make up the collections of many of the world's leading museums such

as the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Museum of Modern Art in Paris, the Contemporary Museum in Stockholm, the Museum of Modern Art in Belgrade and the Kennedy Centre in Washington. Ernst Neizvestny wrote and published four books on the Philosophy of Art: “About the Synthesis in Art” (1982), “Neizvestny is speaking” (1984), “Space, Time and Synthesis in Art” (1990), “Centaur: Ernst Neizvestny on Art, Literature and Philosophy” (1992). Ernst Neizvestny also lectured at the largest universities in the world. The topics of his lectures are: “Art and Freedom”, “Art and Society”, “Dante and Dostoyevsky”. His fate and works became the subject of many books, Ernst Neizvestny is noted in the novel by Alexander Zinoviev “Yawning Heights” and in the documentary film “One Day of Truth”.

The main focus of scientific work is on his creative path and the study of his works: the most famous are: “A Tree of Life”, on which he worked all his life, and “A Golden Child”, specially created for the city of Odesa.

Formulation of the problem. The life path and philosophy of creativity of the outstanding world-famous sculptor Ernst Neizvestny, embodied in his most famous works: “A Tree of Life” and “A Golden Child”.

The purpose of the article is the study of the creative life of the Russian-American sculptor Ernst Neizvestny; his works and creative contribution to the modern look of Odesa.

Research methodology. The study of life and works of the sculptor Ernst Neizvestny; the creation and implementation of his famous works: “A Tree of Life” and “A Golden Child”; his contribution to the development of the modern look of Odesa.

Basic material and results.

Life and creativity. Ernst Iosifovich Neizvestny is a Soviet and American sculptor, a member of the Latvian Academy of Sciences, was born on April 9, 1925 in Sverdlovsk (USSR) in the family of an otorhinolaryngologist, Ernst's mother was a biologist and poetess (Fig. 1, 2). His grandfather M.I. Neizvestny founded the largest printing house in the city in the house of the Trofimovs' heirs on Kommercheskaya Street in Beloretsk, where after the revolutionary events of 1917 he worked as a typesetter.

From childhood, Ernst began to sculpt, participated in the All-Union competitions of children's creativity (1939 – 1942), but for almost all his life he has tossed between Art and Biology; and also between Art and Philosophy – while studying at the Art Institute, at the same time he studied at the Faculty of Philosophy at Moscow State University. In August 1942, he was drafted into the Red Army, and already in October 1943, a Junior Lieutenant Neizvestny was sent to the army in the airborne troops unit on the formed 4th Ukrainian Front. Later he was appointed a commander of a rifle platoon. 260th Guards Rifle Regiment of the 86th Guards Rifle Division of the 5th Shock Army and took part in many combat operations of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian Fronts, including the assault on Budapest. At the end of the Great Patriotic War on April 22, 1945, he was seriously wounded in Austria, declared dead and posthumously awarded the Order of the Red Star, which was awarded to him 25 years later, and the medal “For Courage”. After having been wounded, he walked on crutches for three years, with a broken spine, and even began to stutter. For some time he taught drawing at the Sverdlovsk Infantry School, studied at the Academy of Arts of the Latvian SSR in Riga (1946 – 1947), at the Moscow Art Institute named after V. I. Surikov (1947 – 1954), and was a student of the courses at the Faculty of Philosophy of Moscow State University.

In 1976, Ernst Neizvestny left the Soviet Union and emigrated to the United States through Switzerland (Zurich). Since 1977 he has lived in New York and worked at Columbia University. He celebrated his 80th birthday in Russia, and in 1996 he was an adviser on culture to the Russian President Boris Yeltsin.

Ernst Neizvestny died on August 9, 2016 in New York, after a serious illness, at the age of 92.

While being still a student at the Surikov Institute, Ernst Neizvestny received orders for the design of new expositions at the Sverdlov Museum; his works received international medals and

were acquired by the Tretyakov Gallery, the Russian Museum (Kremlin Builder Fyodor Kon); participated in youth republican and all-Union exhibitions in Moscow: the VI World Festival of Youth and Students (1957), where the sculptor received two prizes; All-Union art exhibition “40 years of the Komsomol” (1958); exhibition of works by artists of the studio of E. Belyutin (“Taganka”) with the participation of Yu. Sooster, V. Yankilevsky and Yu. Sobolev-Nolev (1962).

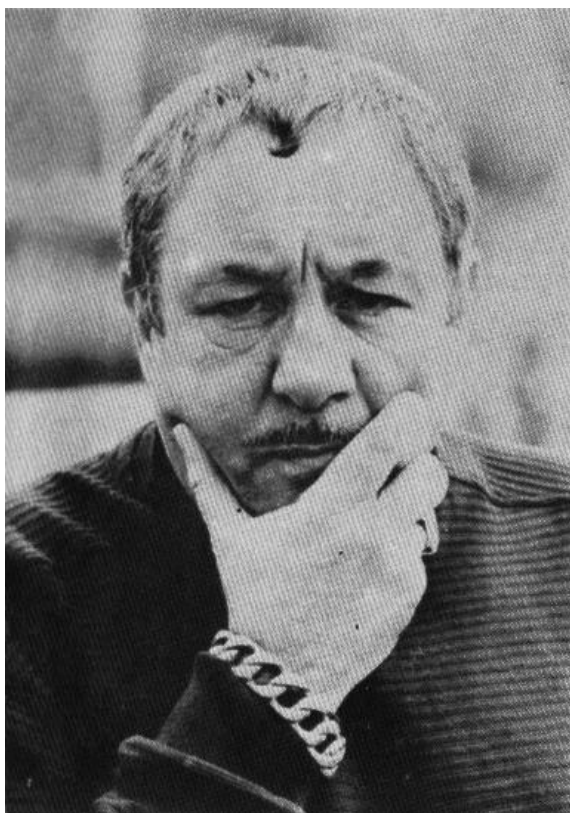


Fig. 1. Ernst Neizvestny, a photo from the book by Vera Zubareva “A Treatise about angels” (1995)

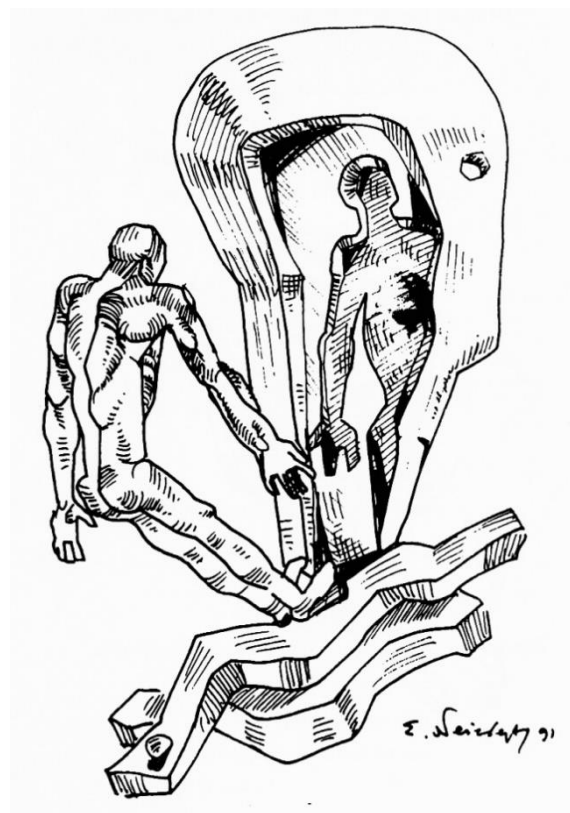


Fig. 2. “It is unknown yet, what is happening there...” – a picture from the book by Vera Zubareva «A Treatise about angels» (1995)

In 1956, the artist worked on the architectural monument “A Tree of Life” – a giant sculpture, symbolizing a creative union of Art and Science. This project, according to the sculptor, is the main project of his life. In 1959, Ernst Neizvestny became the winner of the All-Union competition for the creation of a monument to Victory in the Great Patriotic War.

In 1961, the first personal exhibition by E. Neizvestny took place in the Moscow club “Druzhba”. In 1962, he participated in the famous exhibition at the Manezh “30 Years of the Moscow Union of Artists”, crushed by Nikita Khrushchev, who called his sculptures as “degenerate art”. Namely this was the reason for the beginning of his conflict with Nikita Sergeevych, who let him out of the country with pleasure. Interestingly, after the death of Khrushchev, at the request of the relatives of the former Head of the State, Ernst Neizvestny created a tombstone for him at the Novodevichie cemetery.

Since 1965, Ernst Neizvestny has repeatedly participated in art exhibitions in the West [2].

A Tree of Life. Ernst Neizvestny: “My most favorite work is the Pushkin's poem “The Prophet”, and the best sculptor I know is the six-winged seraph from the same poem. Remember how the “Prophet” is created by Pushkin:

And he cut my chest with a sword
And took out a trembling heart
And coal, burning with fire
He put a hole in his chest.”

The main work of Ernst Neizvestny was a huge monument, which he conventionally called the “A Tree of Life”. It contains the theme of the dualistic contradiction of man and nature, a man and the second nature – a man himself. This theme is already polyphonic in itself that is why he was so attracted by the works of Dostoevskiy, who was close to the sculptor in polyphony and the struggle of contradictions, contained in himself. Ernst Neizvestny worked on lots of Dostoevskiy's works – he managed to publish illustrations for the novel “Crime and Punishment”, in Switzerland, together with the director and actor Ingold Wildenauer, he staged the play “Notes from the Underground”.

In 1956, when Neizvestny was in a very serious condition: it seemed to him that there was no point in working anymore, he thought about his future fate as an artist, and one night he saw “A Tree of Life” – he woke up in the morning with a ready decision. True, then “A Tree of Life” did not consist of seven turns of Mebius, but of one turn. But the overall shape, the shape of the crown of the tree and the shape of the heart was determined. Thus, Ernst saw a super-task that reconciled him with his real fate and gave him, even if fictitious, a model that made it possible to work nowhere, but for a single goal.

What is “A Tree of Life”? These are the seven turns of Mebius, designed in the shape of a heart. For Ernst Neizvestny, symbols and signs are not an empty place: in the Bible, “a tree” is a synonym for “a heart”, and “a heart” is a synonym for a cross. Thus, "A Tree of Life" combines these three concepts. Mebius is also considered by many people as a kind of both scientific and metaphysical model of the universe, and this is important because, in principle, all structures that claim to be a temple role are a micromodel of the universe. Even just the plan, just the foundation of any temple is symbolically a map of the universe, in all religions. E. Neizvestny proposes a sculpture, the principle of construction of which is borrowed from temple architecture, trying to create a kind of synthesis – a sculpture in an architectural form. At the same time, this sculpture is very unexpected for traditional construction, since there is no division into the interior and the exterior in it.

“A Tree of Life” is placed in the centre of the cross formed by north, south, east and west. The tunnel-letters have not only a symbolic meaning (passing through a letter is a passage to the meaning), but also a visual one: the inscription in four languages (Russian, English, Chinese and Hebrew) “People, living in the times of the destroyed temple are similar to people, living in the times destruction of the temple”.

The centre of “A Tree of Life” is everywhere and nowhere. All this is an attempt to combine several principles, an attempt to combine the eternal foundations of art and its temporary content. The base, pitiful, insignificant units constantly and eternally in faith in order to become noble, majestic, meaningful (Fig. 3) [3].

A Golden Child. Ernst Neizvestny visited Odesa for the first time in 1944 as a soldier of the Red Army, when it had just been liberated. He was struck by the devastation in the city and the strength of the unbroken spirit of the Odesa's citizens, who had gone through two and a half years of occupation.

This contrast was remembered by the future sculptor that laid the beginning to the idea of the conceived sculptural composition “A Golden Child” on the occasion of the celebration of the 200th anniversary of the city of Odesa. He believed that in the era of independence of Ukraine, the Southern Palmyra should become the sea capital of the new state, a capitalist city prospering in trade and arts.

Ernst Neizvestny said: “A Golden Child, according to the plan, was originally intended namely for Odesa. I thought that somewhere in... the elements of optimism must be kept. This is a giant child, something like small Gargantua. He is like hope, appears from a flower. Or may be hatches from an egg. In short, he symbolizes something new that emerges, something what the future belongs to. In any case, I would like to hope for this... For the first time in my life, I created a monument in a bright, joyful, romantic way. “A Golden Child” is a bright, sunny image of a giant being born, a hope for the prosperity of the future free city” (Fig. 4).



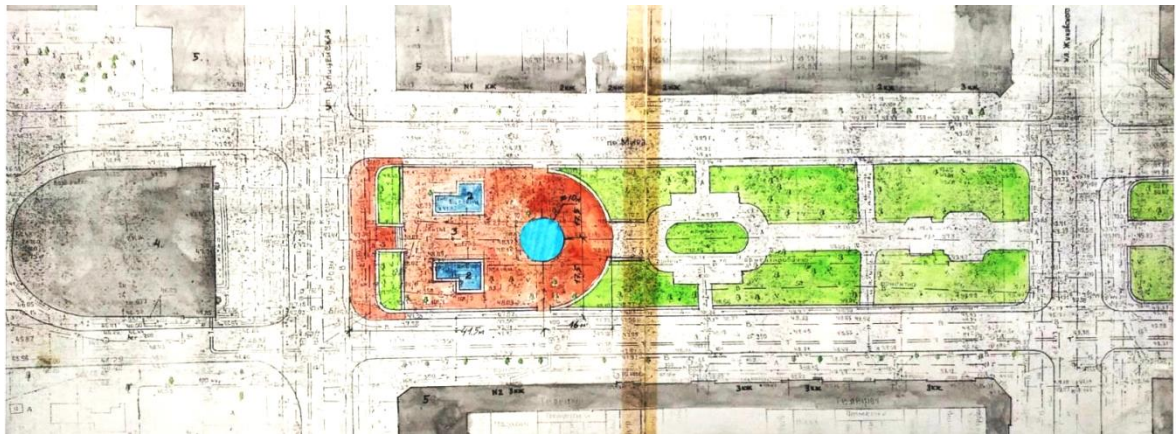
Fig. 3. Ernst Neizvestny on the opening of his composition "A Tree of Life" (2004)



Fig. 4. "A Golden Child", Odesa. Ukraine (installed in 1995)



a)



b)

Fig. 5. "A Golden Child", a variant of placement of the sculptural composition in Alexandrovskiy Avenue (1993): a) a general view; b) a general plan (V. L. Glazirin)

The work on the project and calculation of the site for the erection of “A Golden Child” was headed by the head of the city's urban planning department and the chief architect of the city Vladimir Glazirin. Initially, it was proposed to install a sculptural composition at the end of the square at the intersection of Aleksandrovskiy Avenue and Bunina Street, opposite the Kyiv restaurant (now there is a monument to the Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz), this proposal was approved (Fig. 5). But after the next elections, the new mayor Eduard Gurvits asked to find another place for the monument. Everyone came to this opinion, since modern sculpture, made on a large scale, will be discordant with the architecture of the historical center of the city. In addition, the seaport, which had just survived the reconstruction, was an architectural complex with large open spaces [4].

“A Golden Child” was opened on May 9, 1995. The composition organically fit into the landscape of the port and the city. The sculptor Ernst Neizvestny himself was also present at the opening of the monument: “I was astonished to see how “A Golden Child” looks like in nature, on the square in front of the seaport. It seems to me that it is difficult to find a better place to install this sculpture – how it fits the surrounding landscape ...” [5].

Today it is difficult to imagine a city without this composition, just as it is impossible to imagine the monument itself in any place other than the seaport. And for young people born in the 90s, it seems that the “boy” was always on the forecourt (Fig. 6, 7) [4].



Fig. 6. V. Glazirin, E. Neizvestny, New York. The USA (1992)



Fig. 7. A signature of E. Neizvestny on the book “Neizvestny is speaking” (1992)

Conclusions. A brilliant theory of arts’ synthesis, a monumental style of sculpture and graphics, integrating spiritual content and modern forms, the vision of the world as harmony and freedom – all these are symbolically conveyed in pictures, graphics, sculptures and monuments of Neizvestny.

His works make up the collections of many leading world’s museums, such as: the Museum of Modern Art in New-York, the Museum of Modern Arts in Paris, the Modern Museum in Stockholm, the Museum of Modern Art in Belgrade and Kennedy Centre in Washington.

E. Neizvestny is the author of essays, memoirs, was engaged in poetic creativity. His four books in Philosophy of Art were edited: “About the synthesis in Art” (1982), “Neizvestny is speaking” (1984), “Space, time and synthesis in Art” (1990), “Centaur”: “E. Neizvestny about Art, Literature and Philosophy” (1992). Also he read lectures in the largest world’s Universities. The themes of his lectures are: “Art and freedom”, “Art and Society”, “Dante and Dostoevskiy”. Neizvestny emigrated from the former USSR in 1976 to the USA and lived in New-York. He is an honest member of the Swedish Academy of Sciences, the New-York Academy of Sciences and Arts, the European Academy of Arts and Natural and Humanitarian Sciences.

His fate and creativity became the subject of many books, articles and films. E. Neizvestny was noticed in the narrative of A. Zynovyev “Gaping heights” and in the documentary “One day of truth”, based on the noble lecture of A. Solzhenytsyn [1].

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ЕРНСТ НЕІЗВЕСТНИЙ – СКУЛЬПТОР, ЩО ЗАЙМАЄТЬСЯ ФІЛОСОФІЄЮ МИСТЕЦТВА

¹В.Л. Глазирин,

arhiglaz@gmail.com, ORCID: 0000-003-4057-7384

¹С.С. Сторожук,

mesvet@ukr.net, ORCID: 0000-0001-8390-7190,

¹Н.В. Дубініна,

naty.dubinina83@ukr.net, ORCID: 0000-0002-3250-9528,

¹Одеська державна академія будівництва та архітектури, Україна

Анотація. Стаття присвячена видатному всесвітньвідомому скульптору, який займається філософією мистецтва, Ернст Неізвестний, який представляє монументальний синтез руського авангарду Кандинського, Малевича, Татліна і Філонова. Його творчість несе в собі унікальне поєднання ідей Сходу та Заходу та втілює концепцію синтезу мистецтв, монументальний стиль скульптури та графіки, що інтегрує духовний зміст та сучасні форми, бачення світу як гармонії та свободи – все це символічно передано у малюнках, графіці, скульптурі та монументах Неізвестного. Серед його творів розглянуто відомі роботи: монументальна композиція «Древо Життя» та «Золоте Дитя» в Одесі.

У статті вивчені його творчий шлях і життя: дитинство та молодість у СРСР, участь у Великій Вітчизняній Війні, слава та критика на батьківщині, еміграція до США (1976), а також всесвітнє визнання. Його роботи складають колекції багатьох провідних музеїв світу таких, як Музей Сучасного мистецтва в Нью-Йорку, Музей Сучасних Мистецтв у Парижі, Сучасний Музей у Стокгольмі, Музей Сучасного Мистецтва у Белграді та Кеннеді-Центр у Вашингтоні. Ернст Неізвестний є автором есе, мемуарів, займався поетичною творчістю; читав лекції у найбільших університетах світу, теми його лекцій: «Мистецтво та свобода», «Мистецтво та суспільство», «Данте та Достоевський». Він був почесним членом

Шведської Академії Наук, Нью-Йоркської Академії Наук та мистецтв, Європейської Академії Мистецтв та Природних та Гуманітарних Наук.

Доля та творчість Ернста Неізнаного стали предметом багатьох книг, статей та фільмів (повість Олександра Зинов'єва «Зяючі висоти», документальний фільм «Один день правди», заснований на Нобелівській лекції Олександра Солженицина).

Ключові слова: Ернст Неізнаний, скульптор, Дерево Життя, Золоте дитя.