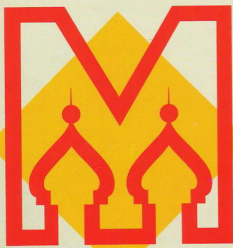


MAY — JUNE 1998



# MOSCOW

*magazine*



**EUROPE  
AND RUSSIA**

**JUBILEE  
OF THE GREAT  
COUTURIER**

**PARIS  
DISCOVERIES:  
LEVITSKY'S  
MASTERPIECES**

**MOSCOW'S HAND  
IN BUCKINGHAM  
PALACE**

# MOSCOW'S HAND IN BUCKINGHAM PALACE

By **ALBERT PIN**

This story tells how LEONID EFROS, designer of miniatures of Peter the Great, Field Marshal Suvorov, Voltaire, Leo Tolstoy, and Fyodor Dostoyevsky, became a portraitist of Her Royal Majesty Queen of Great Britain Elisabeth II, Dowager Queen Elisabeth, and Princess Anne and created a gallery of many other personalities, famous, prominent, and unknown, but invariably attractive.

Portrait  
of Elizabeth II  
in the Yellow  
Room  
of Buckingham  
Palace



**F**or the first time, Elizabeth II visited Russia in October of 1994. This was the country where her relative Nicholas II and his entire family were murdered and to where her grandfather George V bid her forget the way. Elizabeth the Second, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and of Her Other Realms and Territories Queen, Head of the Commonwealth, Defender of the Faith (as the full title of Elizabeth II reads) visited both Russian capitals: Moscow and Saint Petersburg. On October 20, on board the royal yacht "Britannia" moored to the English Embankment on the Neva River in St. Petersburg, the Queen threw a Gala reception in honor of the Russian President and his wife.

The tables in the banquet hall, which was decorated in pastel cream colors, were set for 56 persons. This is the maximum number of guests "Britannia" can receive at one time. Invariably cordial, friendly, and elegant, the Queen was in different hues of blue. Her eyes also let out a clear blue light. However, few guests were honored with more than an official smile or fleeting glance.

The Queen recognized Leonid Efos immediately, approached him, and had a 15-minute conversation with him. Her Majesty's unprecedented attention to the impressive bearded gentleman with a bohemian pigtail, which the Queen touched with her hand as a sign of greeting, obviously in violation of protocol, impressed many of the high-ranking guests at the banquet.

No Russian painter ever enjoyed the honor of drawing a portrait of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II from life. Therefore, it is no exaggeration to say that the creation of the Queen's portraits by St. Petersburg artist Leonid Efos is an important event not only in his biography but also a landmark in Russo-British relations, which were far from cloudless in

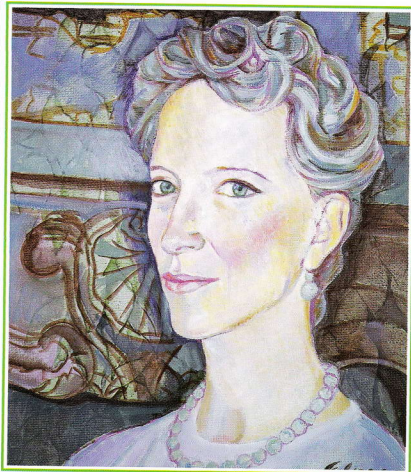


**Portrait  
of Princess  
Anne,  
daughter  
of Elizabeth II**

both the first and the second half of the 20th century.

It is to be recalled that the future British monarch Elizabeth II was only three when she first appeared on the balcony at Buckingham Palace to greet the English people together with her grandfather George V. She was ten years old when she was officially proclaimed heir to the throne. She had just turned 27 at her coronation on June 2, 1953, 45 years ago. The most experienced queen among the planet's heads of state, the most widely traveling monarch in world history, Elizabeth II deliberately refrained

Portrait  
of Princess  
Michael  
of Kent



from visiting a power occupying one sixth of the earth's land area for more than forty years.

Setting out in 1992 for London to paint portraits of Elizabeth II, the Dowager Queen Elizabeth, and other members of the royal family, Leonid Efros was already an established artist. Having graduated from the Moscow Printing Trades College in the 1970s, he started from scratch to study the difficult art of enamel design and created a series of miniature portraits, which gained him the reputation of a gifted enamel painter. Both lay viewers and experts gave due credit to the fine technique and inborn taste displayed by the designer and his peculiar vision of historical personalities such as Peter the Great, French author and philosopher Voltaire, heroes of the 1812 campaign against the French — Denis Davydov, Rayevsky, and others — Dostoyevsky, Suvorov, and Nikolai

“  
*A restrained,  
elegiac  
mood permeates  
the image  
of Princess  
Michael  
of Kent,  
the spouse  
of Prince  
Michael*  
”

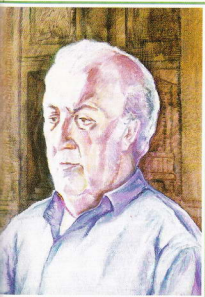
Roerich. Their portraits were displayed at many prestigious exhibitions including the display of enamel painting by Alexei Maximov and Leonid Efros (December 1990 to April 1991) at the State Armory in the Moscow Kremlin, where works by contemporary artists had never been shown before.

Soon the enamel designers received a flattering offer from the administration of the Kremlin Museums to create a portrait of Elizabeth II for the coming exhibition in the Tower of London of items from the Kremlin Armory. The correspondence and negotiations with the Queen's chancellery went on for quite a while. Finally, an agreement was reached, and Efros and Maximov found themselves on the banks of the Thames. At first, there was no question of Elizabeth posing for them. The visitors were offered the best photographs of the Queen. But on March 3, 1992, a sensational event occurred. The two artists from the banks of the Neva River were received at Buckingham Palace by Her Majesty, who had agreed to pose for them.

Following this breakthrough, the doors of other palaces also opened for Leonid Efros. He began work on portraits of Princess Anne, daughter of Elizabeth II, the Dowager Queen Elizabeth, and Princess Michael of Kent. By that time, the artist was more carried away by easel oil painting than enamel miniatures. Having gained a unique opportunity to continue his creative search, he made good use of it.

Leonid Efros created two portraits of Elizabeth II. The first one was an official ceremonial canvas. It presented the image of the lady monarch, Her Majesty with all the carefully reproduced royal regalia, including the crown, in which the British monarch sits on the throne during solemn ceremonies. Observing the strict canons of the genre, the artist, nonetheless, preserves the purely female charm in the image. It seems to me that this is a manifestation of a more harmo-

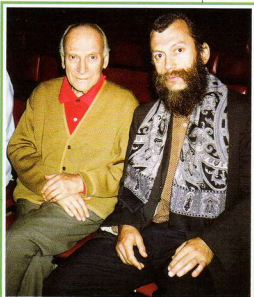
nious power: lofty art, capable of creating an ideal world order. At the same time, the portrait reproduced here may evoke different thoughts in the reader. The indubitable fact is that Leonid Efros passed the test in Buckingham Palace with flying honors. The portrait of Elizabeth II, which the artist offered as a gift to Her Majesty, now forms part of the



“ *Leonid Efros passed the difficult test at Buckingham Palace with flying colors* ”

cess Anne, and Princess Michael of Kent, were drawn by Efros in a different, less formal and more lyrical style. He is no longer concerned with the image of power but conveys a subdued, elegiac mood, heart-felt contemplation. Attention should be drawn to the artist's palette. He obviously prefers bright, clear, and pure colors, like Matisse, who was

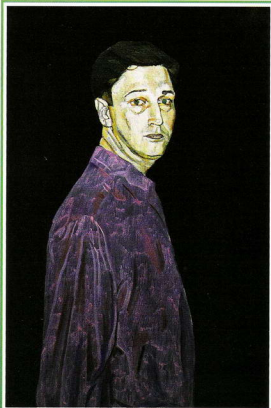
**Left:  
Portrait  
of Federico  
Fellini**



gallery in the same palace on a par with other works from the rich royal collection.

It is appropriate to recall a historical event, which happened 300 years ago: the arrival in 1698 of Peter the Great's embassy in London. On the occasion of the visit by the young Russian Czar, King William III commissioned prominent artist Godfrey Kneller, Rembrandt's pupil, to draw a portrait of Peter from life. This official portrait became one of the best and most authentic depictions of Peter the Great. Art has always played an important part in the diplomatic activities of Europe's royalty.

The second portrait of Elizabeth II, as well as images of the Dowager Queen, Prin-



always puzzled when beautiful colors were dirtied or darkened. In Efros's own words, he worships Matisse deeply but, most of all, reveres Italian masters of the Renaissance.

Leonid Efros continues to create his neoclassic art. New works are added to his portrait gallery every year. He painted portraits of Federico Fellini, Yehudi Menuhin, and inconspicuous but always significant people. His ability to find interesting personalities is truly astonishing, particularly since the artist lives almost as a hermit. Not on the banks of the Neva River any longer, but in the Moscow area, not far from the capital, where he was born a little less than fifty years ago.

**Yehudi  
Menuhin  
and  
Leonid  
Efros**

**Portrait  
of a man  
in a crimson  
shirt**