

Exchange of views

Teenagers from St Petersburg participate in international art project

Fifteen students from the St Petersburg Pedagogical College II have been taking part in a unique project which brings together young people from around the globe. Organised by Kiboko Projects, a non-profit organisation from New York and headed by photographer Mark Scheflen, the project invites teenagers to create diaries about their lives and pro-



duce artwork. These materials then form an ongoing exhibition, archive and communication network that highlight the lives of young people in the world today.

Mr Scheflen, who began the project in Kenya after first working with New York youngsters, says the aim of the growing project is aimed at providing an "educational, artistic and cultural exchange".

One of the activities completed by teenagers in Africa, the USA and Russia has been the making and decorating of masks. Mr Scheflen said he has been fascinated that many of the St Petersburg participants chose to depict landmarks of the city on their masks – like the open bridge and Winter Palace square on the mask shown left.

The youngsters have also been given video cameras to make documentaries about their families and friends. All the material will be exhibited in New York, where Kiboko Projects has already received support from UNICEF. In 2002 the project will come back to St Petersburg where, in the run-up to the city's 300th Anniversary celebrations, the diaries, artwork and videos will be displayed at the Union of Artists exhibition hall.



Alevtina Kuzub, chair of the Art Department of the Pedagogical College II said selecting the 15 students was difficult because, as well as artistic talent, English-language skills were required. It is hoped two of the students will later accompany the project to New York.

Teenage journalists from *Pyat Uglov* ('Five Corners') magazine have also been involved in documenting the progress of the project. When it is completed, each student will receive a bound and printed copy of their illustrated diaries. Two other copies will be made – one for the travelling exhibition and one for a special library.

For more information contact Mark Scheflen at yumumo@aol.com or look up www.kiboko.org



Founder:
ZAO "Pulse St Petersburg"
Publisher:
Ari Luostarinen
Helsinki + 358-500-447 227
e-mail: ari.luostarinen@skoy.fi

Editorial Department:
52, Bolshaya Morskaya Ul.
190000, St Petersburg,
Tel/Fax: 311 6866
Fax: 311 0753
e-mail: editor@pulse.ru
<http://www.pulse.ru>
Editor-in-Chief:
Innokenty Ivanov
Tel/Fax: 311 6866

English-language Editor:
Matthew Brown

Translation assistant:
Desmond Tumulty

Translator:
Mikhail Spiridonov

Associate Editor:
Nadezhda Kozhevnikova

Contributors:
Anya Smetanina
Mikhail Trofimenkov

Designers:
Sergey Tkachenko
Vladimir Yakovlev
Anastasya Degtyareva
Fax: 7-812-311 0753

Head of Sales:
Yulia Belikova
Tel.: 7-812-314 4548
In Finland:
Tel.: +358-9-278 1259
Fax: +358-9-278 1299

Administration:
Irina Zenyuk
Tel.: 311 0204

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