



Mikhail Kopylkov  
(1946–2023)

## OLD GERMAN TOWN Composition

Leningrad, USSR

1980

*Ceramics, grog, glazing, decoration,  
engraving*





SELECTED BY  
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It was almost by chance that an exhibition was held in 1977 in Leningrad in the Blue Drawing Room of the Union of Artists. Each participant had to bring a ceramic piece. It should not be a vase or a dish, but something depictive (at that time, strange, innovative, peculiar, 'wrong' ceramics). Thanks to this exhibition, the artistic association One Composition — the most vibrant and talented in Soviet ceramics — emerged.

One of its organizers was Mikhail Kopylkov, who was an artist of remarkable talent, inspiration and skill, whose works are exhibited in the best museums in the world.

Mikhail Kopylkov suggested using the term 'isoceramics' to define a new kind of ceramics, which creates not objects but their images, to define a new type of art. These are his words: 'We knew that we were speaking a new language that had never been spoken by ceramics before and that this language could be used to discuss dramatic or even tragic themes. Do you think it is ridiculous to express tragedy with some vessels? No, it is possible, oh yes!'

The term did not take root in the artistic environment, but the 1980 composition 'Old German Town' belongs to the very same isoceramics. A real piece of art, devoid of practical application, yet inspiring the viewer and stirring her or his imagination.

Of course, the artist's idea is paramount in every work, while one of the greatest pleasures when visiting a museum is trying to unravel it. What did the artist want to express? What was his inspiration?

Of course, the first thing that comes to your mind when you look at this work is half-timbered houses, the trademark of old Europe. They are common to many towns in the Hanseatic League, the largest and most powerful political and economic association of free cities.

These houses, built in the 15th and 16th centuries, remain in use to this day. They are characterized not only by their visual appeal but also by their reliability. There is a fascinating long history behind each of them, they have seen and lived through a lot.

But besides the understanding of the artist, there is also the understanding of the viewer. Artists recognize our right to interpretation, so things that we see will also be true.

I ask you to look at the familiar from an unusual angle and make your own discovery. This is the privilege that museum gives us.

We travel, see new cities and bring them to life. Some of them welcome us immediately, they are happy to have us there and grant us with pleasant adventures and perfect weather. For some, it takes time to find the key, and we have to visit them time and time again, hoping that one day they will welcome us and open their doors. Each city — and each house — has its own face, its own spirit, its own stories.

Take a look at this composition and find among the nine houses the one that seems familiar to you. With a gust of warm wind from the past, it will take you to your childhood. It will make you smile or feel sad, remind you of important things, tap into the hidden parts of your being.