

Simon Gutman's First Art Exhibition



This is me and my friends from the arts studio in Riga. I'm the one on the ladder holding a cigarette. The photo was taken on the occasion of my first exhibition in 1932.

I studied in a number of art schools in Riga. I attended the arts studio of the Riga graphic artist Roman Suta, I was his 'disciple' and took part in the exhibitions. One exhibition was in 1932. They chose some pictures for the museum, including mine. I created it in my mind, when they were taking me from Dvinsk jail to Riga central prison. It is now that they transport prisoners in a special truck, but back then the guards were just convoying me along the pavement. I kept the impression from that walk for a long time! Sitting in the solitary cell, I began to draw sketches of that image. In spring they let me out, and in summer I finished the picture. And when there was an exhibition of our studio, supervised by Roman Suta, my picture was bought for the Arts Museum. The picture is entitled 'Escorting of a prisoner'.

I remember the studio of Yan Liepin on Mariinskaya Street, in the court yard. When I went there, a few more or less skilled pupils were sitting and drawing. I sat down, too, and took a sheet of paper. And here enters a naked model! Holy smoke, I held my breath! I almost fainted! Well, really! Boys use to spy, through a hole in the fence, and here she comes out in what she was born! I started to draw, and during the break I looked at the other sketches. And the other guys represented the model not in her natural size, like me, but made her look stout - with heavy legs and arms. I asked, 'Where do you see such arms and legs? The model is of quite normal stature!' And they answered, 'You should draw what you think, rather than what you see!' Well, that's the Latvian style! Later I got used to it.