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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Painter of Brezhnev-Honecker Kiss Graffiti Dies

Dmitry Vrubel died of complications from the coronavirus.

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Artist Dmitry Vrubel. **Hannibal Hanschke / DPA / TASS**

Dmitry Vrubel, the Russian painter who shot to fame with a work on the Berlin Wall depicting Soviet and East German communist leaders kissing, has died in the German capital at age 62.

One of the best known Berlin Wall graffiti pieces, Vrubel's 1990 work titled "My God, Help Me to Survive This Deadly Love" features a reproduction of a photograph capturing Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev kissing East German leader Erich Honecker in 1979.

News of Vrubel's death was shared by Milena Orlova, editor-in-chief of the Art Newspaper Russia, late Sunday.

Tributes from fans and colleagues poured in on Vrubel's Facebook page after news of his death spread late Sunday.

Vrubel was hospitalized with suspected coronavirus in late June, his wife, artist Viktoria Timofeyeva, has said. He was placed in a medically induced coma in mid-July due to heart failure, Timofeyeva wrote on Facebook.

Born in Moscow in 1960, Vrubel originally moved to Berlin in 1990, where he almost immediately became famous for his wall painting.

Vrubel had studied in art school, although he didn't graduate. But in 1983 he was accepted as a member of the Artists Union of the U.S.S.R.

Vrubel was an early and constant art dissident. In 1986 he organized unofficial — and illegal — art shows in his apartment, and the next year he joined the "Avant-Garde Club" (Russian abbreviation KLAVA), which included some of the best non-official cultural figures of the times, including artist and writer Dmitry Prigov and poet Lev Rubinstein.

In Moscow in 2020 Vrubel was a witness for defense of two curators charged with inciting religious enmity with a show called "Forbidden Art-2006" at the Sakharov Center.

At the time he said, "We are once again in a country where the state supports one position and esthetic and calls everything else illegal. It's horrifying."

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