

# Let's Talk Art!


6th Edition

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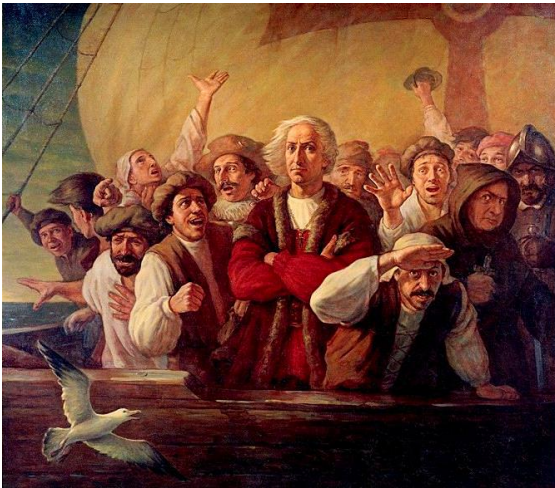
**Let's Talk Art!** is an interactive e-newsletter that provides interviews with professional artists from around the world. We hope you learn something new with each edition. Enjoy the read and stay inspired! - [New Wave](#)

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## An Interview with Igor Babailov



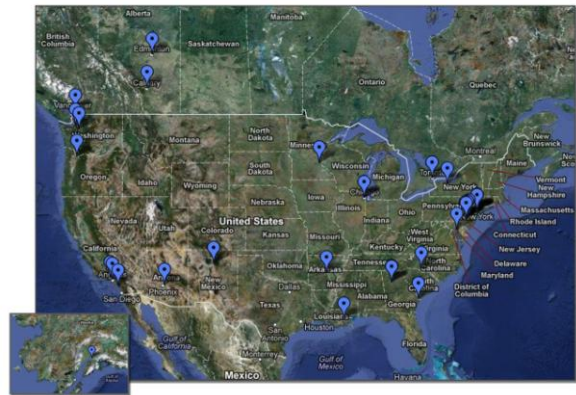
"For Gold, God, and Glory"

Arrival of Christopher Columbus in the Americas

Oil on Canvas, 70" x 79"

**Location:** I'm Russian by birth and American by choice. My main studio is in Brentwood, TN. However, I have clients world-wide.

**Career:** Painted my first commissioned portrait at the age of 4, a portrait of my daycare friend's father, in exchange for a toy car. I consider the start of my artistic career at the age of 9, when I



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began my formal fine art education. I come from a family of teachers and I love to teach, I conduct my Portrait Master workshops with lectures and life demonstrations in the U.S., Canada and around the world in universities, private clubs, portrait societies. In 1999 I was invited to teach 'Figure in Oil' course at the Florence Academy of Art in Italy.

**Major portrait commissions include:** two Popes for the Vatican, U.S. president George W. Bush, Russian president Vladimir Putin, two Canadian Prime Ministers Brian Mulroney and Jean Chretien, Patriarch Kirill of Russia, Nelson Mandela, Senators and Ambassadors in the U.S., Canada, and Russia.

**Major awards and recognitions (Click to view)**

**Education:** I was fortunate to receive my sixteen years fine art education in Russia, as at the time it was the only school in the world not affected by modernism. I started at the preparatory fine art school (1974-1978), continued at the fine art school for gifted children under the Russian Academy of Arts (1978-1983) followed by the Surikov Institute aka Surikov Academy under the Russian Academy of Arts (1983-1990). I have the Master of Fine Arts degree and believe that there is no limit in learning, as long as you are passionate about life.

**Little Known Fact:** At the age of 19 to 21 (1984-1986), I served for two years in the compulsory 2 year military service in Russia. I was a sniper and did the artistic works in the spare time. In 1986 right before my demobilization from the military I was stationed in Minsk, Belorussia, near Chernobyl when the Chernobyl's nuclear disaster happened. Since my division was one of three divisions appointed to clean up the mess of that catastrophe, under

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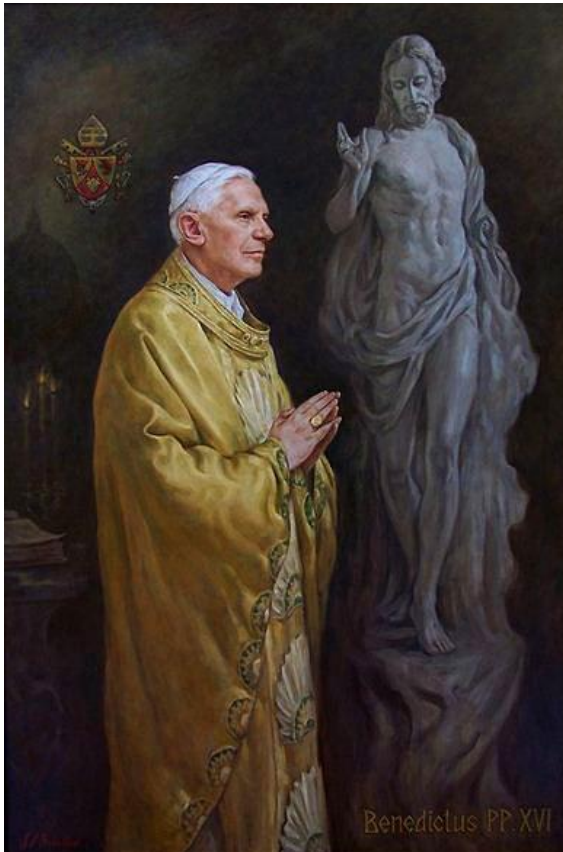
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directions of the 'big star' generals I drew the strategic maps of Chernobyl and the affected surrounding areas, to initiate those cleaning works.



"The Truth, The Way, and The Life"  
Portrait of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI  
Oil on Canvas, 72" x 48"  
Collection: Vatican, Rome

### **Personal Information**

***When was the moment you knew you wanted to be a painter?***

I wanted to be an artist ever since I remember holding a pencil in my hand for the very first time.

***What is your style of painting?***

It's alla-prima with the use of many traditional techniques.

***Did you have a mentor or someone you***

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### ***looked up to?***

I was fortunate to study and receive my training in the studios of the Russian Academy of Arts, in the unbroken mentorship passed on directly from one person to another within sustained period of time. In this direct teacher-student lineage I'm honored and humble to be a third generation student of such Masters as Repin, Serov, Korovin and Arkhipov.

### **Confessions**

#### ***What do you like most about what you do?***

To see the tears of joy and happiness in my clients' eyes, when they look at my work.

#### ***What is the largest hurdle in the arts you have had to overcome?***

To make the heart and brain "work together." The business people say that they "do not need the heart" to make money, yet how can you be a successful artist without the heart?...

#### ***What is a goal yet to be achieved?***

Every portrait is a new project that leads to new discoveries and happenings which determine the next goal.



Babailov in Studio with Grand View Palette

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## **Art's Lesson**

### ***What is the most important lesson you have learned from painting?***

That there is no such thing as a strong painting without a solid drawing. When at the age of 13 I switched from watercolor to oil, I found it to be an enormous challenge and even felt that my drawings were much stronger than my paintings. When I shared these concerns with my professor, he said not to worry about this and just "keep drawing and the painting skill will come". Many years passed by since then and the longer it goes the more I'm convinced in my realization of the wisdom of his words.

### ***What advice would you provide to anyone aspiring to paint professionally?***

- 1.) Work from life every chance you get, as that is the only source and the way to advance your skill.
- 2.) When painting or drawing, the last thing you want to think about is 'money', as it will show in your work.
- 3.) Don't settle for the 'good enough', strive for perfection.

## **Etc.**

### ***Do you have an art book or DVD that you would recommend?***

For many years one of my inspirations was the documentary film about the great Italian artist Pietro Annigoni. "Annigoni - Portrait of an Artist". It may be ordered and purchased online.

### ***Do you have a favorite painter?***

Every era produced great painters that today I admire. There were: Leonardo, Raphael, G.B. Tiepolo, Rubens, Hals, Van Dyke, Gerome, Sargent, and numerous Russian painters: Briullov, Semiradsky, Repin, Levitan, Serov,

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Arkhipov, to name a few.

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-Igor Babailov  
[www.Babailov.com](http://www.Babailov.com)



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