The modern architecture of Belarus is characterized by application of innovative technologies and forms and new interpretations of the architectural and artistic styles (railway terminal and Palace of Republic, National Library in Minsk). The restoration activity is gaining momentum in the urban development of the city (Troitskoe Suburb and Upper City in Minsk). The Master Plans of Minsk and other cities of Belarus have been developed and approved in the recent years. President of the Republic of Belarus A.G. Lukashenko, entrusted the urban planners and architects with a task of regenerating towns of Belarus; the National Rural Area Recovery and Small Agricultural Towns Construction Program was adopted. The conceptual design of regeneration of the Minsk historical downtown and turning it into a community and tourist zone was developed. The Minsk City Hall building was restored and the construction of another monument of architecture — Evropa Hotel in Minsk — is underway.

Three new stations of the Minsk Underground (Sportivnaya, Kuntsevshchina and Kamennaya Gorka) characterized by a unique modern architecture were commissioned. A unique television tower is currently being designed to be built in the capital of Belarus.

The modern Belarusian literature harmoniously combines traditionalistic and post-modernistic trends. The men of letters are continuously in search for new genres, styles, and themes. The theme of patriotism was highlighted. Many works focused on the idea of national sovereignty. The works of the Belarusian literature have been translated into many languages including all European languages.

The Belarusian literature gradually gained the international prestige. It disseminated beyond the national culture boundaries by the mid 20th century. The progress of the Belarusian writers in interpreting the WWII theme and developing comedy writing has been recognized not only across the former Soviet Union and socialist camp, but also in many countries worldwide.

BOOK PUBLISHING AND PERIODICAL PRESS

540 publishers and publishing agencies, private and state-owned (including 6 state-owned publishing agencies), and 334 economy entities involved in the printing business were registered in Belarus as of 1.1.2006. Totally, 10,784 titles of books with the total run of 40.3 million copies were published in Belarus in 2005. There are 4.1 books and brochures for each Belarusian resident.

Belarusian book publishers and book distributors are permanent participants of international book fairs. In 2005, the National Expositions Books of the Republic of Belarus were presented at 10 such book shows in Moscow, Kaliningrad, Kiev, Chisinau, Vilnius, Warsaw, Frankfurt am Main and Beograd.

Minsk annually holds the International Book Fair (MIBF) contributing to expansion and strengthening of the cooperation with book publishers and book distributors. 522 exponents from 16 countries participated in the 13th MIBF Books of Belarus (9–12 February 2006).

1,187 periodicals, including 748 newspapers, 400 journals, 35 bulletins, 2 catalogs, 2 almanacs, and also 8 information agencies are registered in the Republic of Belarus as of 1.1.2006. More than two third of all registered publications are non-governmental. The press is issued in the Belarusian, Russian, English, German, Polish, Ukrainian and other languages. The journals Belarus & Business, Computational Methods in Applied Mathematics, The Minsk Times newspaper and others are published in English.

The Belarusian press is characterized by a diversified orientation, pluralism of opinions, views and positions. Periodicals (social and political, youth, children, culturological, fictional, scientific and methodical, advertising, entertaining, etc.) cover all social, age, professional, national strata and groups of the population.

The X International Specialized Exhibition Mass Media in Belarus was held 3–6 May 2006 in Minsk in which over 600 mass media agencies from Belarus, Russia, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, PRC, Latvia, USA, Poland, Lithuania, Moldova and Israel participated. The First
Belarusian Information Forum Mass Media as Factor of Preventing Challenges and Threats of XXI Century was held within the framework of the exhibition.

The Belarusian musical art — folk and professional — is an integral part of the world cultural civilization. Profound devotion of native Belarusians to customs and traditions of their ancestors defined to a great extent one of the most distinctive features of the modern Belarusian musical culture — intactness of its original core and its current significance. Belarus may be rightfully considered a cultural sanctuary against the background of the common European cultural landscape, since ancient original forms of the nation’s heritage still authentically exist in the day-to-day life of rural communities as a vivid evidence of creative genius of one of the ancient Slavic nations.

Diverse works are being created in the line with the symphonic, chamber-instrumental, vocal, and choir music of the academic trend. A professional song genre is being developed, new woks of Christian sacred music appeared.

Developing the youth popular music art is one of the priority spheres of the state policy. The National Youth Theatre of Popular Music established with an active support of the President of the Republic of Belarus A.G. Lukashenko allows for establishing creative studios for training popular music singers, and training young performers based on individual plans.

The National Orchestra of Symphonic and Popular Music conducted by M. Finberg contributes greatly to promoting and propagandizing the national popular music art.

The State Academic People’s Orchestra named after I. Zhinovich, National Academic Symphonic Orchestra, National Academic Choir named after G. Shirma, National Academic People’s Choir named after G. Tsitovich, Academic Choir of the Belarusian Radio and Television, Symphonic Orchestra of the Belarusian Television and Radio, National Orchestra of Symphonic and Popular Music, National Dance Ensemble, Belarusian State Philharmonic Society, Belarusian State Academy of Music, music groups Pesnyary and Syabry, folk-rock groups Palats, Krama and ethno-rock group Troitsa and the choreographic folklore National Company Khoroshky are available in Belarus. Over the recent years, new creative groups have been formed, namely, the Presidential Orchestra of the Republic of Belarus, a soloist ensemble Classic-Avant-Garde, a male vocal quintet Chisty Golos (Pure Voice) and a jazz band Yablochny Chai (Apple Tea).

Consistently implementing the program of promotion of professional musical art in the republic contributed to emergence of new creative groups in actually all regional Philharmonic Societies.

Of special concern is the aspect of strengthening of a personnel creative potential of the republic, and maintaining a traditionally high level of musical education of all stages. Nearly 500 state children musical schools function in Belarus.

THEATRES

28 state theatres, including the National Academic Bolshoi Theatre of Opera, National Academic Bolshoi Theatre of Ballet, Belarusian State Musical Theatre are available in Belarus as of 1.1.2006: in Minsk — 12, Brest — 2, Vitebsk — 2, Gomel — 3, Grodno — 2, Mogilev — 2, Molodechno — 2 (the Puppet theatre is available in each of the above cities) and one theatre in Bobruisk, Slonim and Mozyr each. The Belarusian National Academy of Arts and the Belarusian State University of Culture and Arts train actors, producers, scenographers and specialists in drama study.

CINEMATOGRAPHY

The movies are produced by the National Film Studio Belarusfilm with Creative Association of Documentary and Popular-Scientific Films Letapis and the animated cartoon studio being affiliated to it. Currently, the production basis of the National Film Studio Belarusfilm allows production of 10–12 feature films, 20–25 documentaries and 4–5 animated cartoons a year. Belarusian films were awarded with prizes at dozens of international film festivals and are regularly presented at the large European film markets. Since 1981, the Movie
Actor Studio-Theatre and since 2001 the Belarusian Cinematography History Museum function within the structure of the Belarusfilm.

In addition to feature films, a large number of video films is produced by the production and creative enterprise Belarusian Video Center in Belarus since 1989. Its major goals imply producing films covering major cultural and political events in the country, promoting spiritual revival of the nation, propagandizing the Belarusian culture abroad, as well as creating the film fund of historical and cultural heritage of Belarus.

Nearly 3 thousand film-projectors (including 160 movie theatres), as well as 346 video rooms and video hire clubs operate in Belarus.

The Belarusian Cinematographers Union contributed greatly to the development of the Belarusian cinematography — it, in particular, actively promoted establishment of independent film and video studios since the late 1980s — and is one of the major promoters and organizers of the International Film Festivals Listapad, Female Movies (Minsk), Animaevka (Mogilev), the National Festival of Belarusian Films (Brest) and others.

The modern Belarusian art is diverse in its character, free in selection of themes and expression tools that opens up new vistas for the progress.

Museums. 133 state museums working within the system of the Ministry of Culture and 58 branches functioned in Belarus as of 1.1.2006. In addition, institutions of education, organizations, enterprises and collective farms operate over 1 thousand museums on a voluntary basis. The museum fund of the republic comprises over 2.6 million exhibits of the main fund.

The National Arts Museum of the Republic of Belarus is a “visiting card” of the country. It possesses an exclusively rich collection of ancient Belarusian and Russian fine arts pieces of the 18th-early 20th century, as well as collections of the modern Belarusian art, East art and West European art. The museum operates 6 branches in the republic, including the Mir Castle complex (in 2000, it was included into the List of monuments of the UNESCO World cultural heritage) being a supreme achievement of the Belarusian defense architecture.

The National Museum of History and Culture of Belarus is the leading history museum. Its funds comprise over 250 thousand exhibits of the major fund only, rich collections of archeology, numismatics, ethnography and everyday life, military history, handwritten and early printed books, icon painting and articles of the professional and folk art.

The Belarusian State Museum of History of the Great Patriotic War was established in the liberated capital in 1944. Many Belarusian and foreign researchers visit the Museum to study valuable evidences of the WWII stored in its funds.

The Belarusian State Museum of Folk Architecture and Everyday Life was established in picturesque Minsk suburbs in 1976. Its exhibits demonstrate ethnographic features of 6 major regions of Belarus and the museum sets as its prime objective to preserve monuments of folk wooden architecture.

Over 350 institutions of culture of a new type have been established in Belarus in the recent years: library-clubs, library-museums, library-folk medicine houses.

Totally, about 13 thousand of institutions of culture — theatres, circuses, institutions of higher and secondary education, museums, museums, sanctuaries and memorial complexes — were available in Belarus in 2005.

Owing to the governmental support, Belarus annually hosts over 30 international, national and regional festivals. Multiple shows, contests, art festivities of the international and national level define the cultural life of Belarus through the entire year. The festivals Slavic Bazar in Vitebsk, Belarusian Musical Fall, Golden Popular Song, Minsk International Film Festivals Listapad and Harvesting Festivity Dazhinky became the most popular among the Belarusians and foreign tourists.

The III International Theatre Forum Golden Knight was held for the first time in Belarus in 2005. 700 representatives of the dramatic art from different countries participated in it.
The victory of Kseniya Sitnik (Mozyr) at the 2005 Junior Eurovision Song Contest (Husselt, Belgium) was one of the greatest cultural triumphs of Belarus in the international arena.

The Days of Culture of the Republic of Belarus abroad which were successfully held in Armenia, Serbia and Montenegro and China are the most representative and extensive form of the international cooperation in the cultural sphere. The Days of Culture of other countries in Belarus are great event in the cultural life. The year of 2005 is the Year of Culture of Russia in Belarus. the Days of Culture of Moldova, Kaliningrand Province (Russia) and Egypt (organized for the first time) were held in 2005.

Officials of the Ministry of Culture of Belarus officially maintain contacts with counterparts from more than 30 countries worldwide and also from many regions of the Russian Federation.

MOST SIGNIFICANT CULTURAL EVENTS IN 2005

7 January — The President of the Republic of Belarus signed Instruction On Awarding Special Prizes of the President of the Republic of Belarus to Cultural and Artistic Workers.

19 January — The exposition of Belarusian artists Art from Belarus — Bridge Between East and West was opened in Flensburg (Schleswig-Holstein, Germany). The Exposition became the first Belarusian cultural action in the FRG in 2005.

27 January — The Memorial Complex Brest Fortress Hero was awarded the highest decoration of the Union of St. George (Saint Peters-burg) — the Order of Gallantry.

February — A new national festival contest National Musical Award was announced in Belarus. The objective of the contest is to promote Belarusian show business and support creative youth.

2 March — An open national contest of plays for children and teenagers was announced in Belarus.

9 March — The Belarusian film Once More About War won the prize for the best producer debut at the IX Russian Festival Literature and Cinematography held in Gatchina, Leningrad Province (Russia).

11 March — The Presidential orchestra of the Republic of Belarus began tour in Belarus dedicated to the 60th Anniversary of Victory with a new program “At May Short Nights”.

14 March — The President of the Republic of Belarus established a Special Award Toward Peace and Understanding Through Art.

16 March — The movie Chernobyl Heart — Oscar prize-winner in February 2004 — was premiered in the National Museum of Women in Art in Washington.

23 March — III National Show Contest for the best management of libraries in the sphere of ecological education and population awareness enhancement was announced in Belarus.


April. A unique multivolume publication of historical and documentary chronicles of towns and districts of Belarus Memory was issued.

3-6 May — The Days of Belarusian cinematography were held in Moldova.

7 May — The Concert Program Let Us Pay Tribute to Those Great Years initiated festivities in Minsk dedicated to the 60th Anniversary of the Great Victory.

16 May — VI Belarusian Festival of National Cultures opened in Minsk.

8 June — T-34-85 tank was installed in the exposition of the Gomel Regional Military and Historical Museum.

11 June — The Belarusian exposition opened in Venice at the 51st International Exposition of Modern Fine Arts Biennale. 30 paintings and sculptures of Belarusian artists A. Shkarubo, R. Vashkevich, A. Zadorin, S. Voichenko. N. Zaloznaya. I. Tishina, L. Khobotov and V. Tsesler were exposed.

13 June — Svetlana Okruznaya, the People’s Actress of Belarus, member of the Council of the Republic of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus, became a Laureate of the...
International Peace Prize (she was awarded this prize by the decision of the US United Cultural Convention).

July. The movie My Lord of the Belarusian producer Galina Adamovich was awarded the main prize among short-length films in the contest program of the prestigious International Film Festival in Karlovy Vary.

15 July — The architectural and cultural complex of the Radzivills’ residence in Nesvizh and Duga Struve are included into the UNESCO List of World Heritage.

29 August — Two folk dance ensembles (Mogilev Region) Run (Mogilev) and Yunost (Bobruisk) were conferred the title Honored Group of the Republic of Belarus.

3 September — The Day of the Belarusian Literature was held in Kamenets, Brest Region.

15-21 July — The International Art Festival Slavic Bazar in Vitebsk was held.

26 October — The President of the Republic of Belarus signed a Decree On Establishing Cinematography Department in the Ministry of Culture.

1 November — The President of the Republic of Belarus decreed the list of material and historical/cultural values included in the National List of Historical and Cultural Values of Belarus exempted from real estate tax.

18 November — The Constituent Meeting of Belarusian writers founded a new national organization Non-Governmental Association Union of Writers of Belarus.

December – The President of the Republic of Belarus signed the Law On Museums and Museum Fund of the Republic of Belarus.

Additional information:

- Ministry of Architecture and Construction of the Republic of Belarus
  http://www.minstroyarch.gov.by
- Ministry of Information of the Republic of Belarus
  http://www.mininform.gov.by
- National Academic Bolshoi Theater of Opera of the Republic of Belarus
  http://www.belarusopera.com
- National Academic Bolshoi Theater of Ballet of the Republic of Belarus
  http://www.baletl.by
- Yanka Kupala National Academic Theatre
  http://www.kupala-theatre.by
- National Academic Drama Theatre named after M. Gorky
  http://www.rustheatre.nn.ru
- Belarusian Republican Theater of Young Spectator
  http://www.tuz-by.com
- Republican Theatre of Belarusian Drama
  http://rtbd.of.by
- RUE National Film Studio Belarusfilm
  http://www.bgak.by.ru
- National Arts Museum of the Republic of Belarus
  http://museum.bsu.by
- National Museum of History and Culture of Belarus
  http://nacbibil.org.by/hist_cult
- Belarusian State Museum of History of Great Patriotic War
  http://www.warmuseum.by