**Aziz:** I am pleased to introduce to our audience, Vladimir Detelenov, as part of our Oral history project. The project aims to have a conversation with people whose destinies are characteristic of the current time, big events, global regional changes and all this gives great material for understanding the era, and most importantly, how people perceive their lives at this time. I think that your story will become a part of historical evidence, which in the future will become for historians to reconstruct history through the eyes of contemporaries as they saw it all. I am not an expert in your field, please introduce yourself. You have a wonderful position, Ambassador and Head of the Office. What is an Ambassador?

**Vladimir**: I am the Ambassador and Development Director of a global company that manages domain zones, i.e. art website names. Apart from domains, which are a complex technological product, all art websites are our customers. Almost 250,000 members of the creative community, collectors, artists and everyone connected with creativity. We create digital services for them, we try to approximate the future development, how the art market will develop, the creative industry in general. We need to think in advance about the digital systems that people will be interested in. Most of the market is the US, Europe, China. Ambassador in Central Asia helps people to use these services.

**Aziz**: it is very important for our region. I can imagine the scale.

**Vladimir:** at the moment there are not as many clients as I would like. I hope this will gradually change. Uzbekistan is opening up to the world, a lot of international events are taking place here. A website is essentially a passport on the internet. You present yourself and it is a message, whether you can be trusted. Social networks are a temporary phenomenon, and when you have your own professional website, the credibility of your persona increases. If you use the domain ". com", it is a commercial sector, when you use the domain ".UZ", it means that you work for the local market, when you use the domain ".art", it means my life is art, there are no barriers and it is a worldwide domain that allows you to make your personal manifesto of how you position yourself, not to mention what is on the site. Based on this concept, starting with the domain name, and the brand starts with the name, we work. All on the latest technology.

**Aziz:** it is wonderful what you are saying. I am far away from all these technologies, although I use them as an ordinary user, and there are a lot of people like me in Central Asia. And it would be very interesting to know whether your profession is so global, advanced and boundless. You are used to communicating across all these borders. Tell me, how does one become an IT specialist? An example like Steve Jobs. Your experience?

**Vladimir:** why did I smile when you said that this project is about preserving history? Because this has been a key theme in my thinking for the last 15 years. For nine years, until last March, I was deputy director of the Pushkin State Museum in Moscow. A world museum with a gigantic collection. I represented all innovations in the field of cultural heritage preservation, including digital heritage preservation, in Europe, participated in all international committees and headed the chair of information technologies in the cultural sphere at the largest and dynamically developing University of the Higher School of Economics. This is the subject of my research and study, it is the intersection of science, technology, art and culture. How one influences the other, as one cannot exist without the other, this structure of interrelation is interesting to me. That's why I can't call myself only an IT specialist. I have 3 different higher education degrees. One of them is museology, protection of monuments, cultural and natural heritage with a specialisation in socio-cultural design. I am trying to look at and study all sets of factors. Today it is IT technology that shapes our environment from the point of view of industrial evolution in developed countries. It is technology that determines how society communicates, how communications are built and how it develops. The development of society is linked to the science and technology that is used. Since the Stone Age, art has not existed outside of technology. Without oil paint, there would be nothing. Without reproduction technology there would be no cinema, etc. if you think about any art other than performance art, it is impossible to imagine it without technology. Although performance art uses materials that are symbolic. This junction is the most interesting for me. Since my youth, the question of self-development has been connected with physical, spiritual and intellectual aspects. And so with this triad, how can I influence the development of society, what contribution can I make so that my life is not meaningless. The key factor in the development of society is culture, not even education. You can teach a bear to ride a bicycle, but it will not become more spiritual. But the question of truly educating a person's culture lies in all the culture that surrounds him. What today is the main driver, interest and tool for the development of culture is digital technology. When we combine these two parts, we get an incredibly interesting junction that helps us understand the world of humanities and the world of exact sciences, how it all connects from the point of view of everything that man has worked and created, and you try to comprehend the heritage that we have. The point of focus of my attention and the work of our team was the technology of digitisation and long-term preservation of everything that surrounds us in digital form. Because if there are no cataclysms, this is the most sustainable kind. I always told customers: when you tell me about a product, you think in terms of 3-5 or 7 years, but when we design the Pushkin Museum, let's see in 30-50 years what will happen, what will happen in 100, 200, 300 years, that is, we are doing some action now and we should already realise how to work with memory and heritage, let's fix it now and preserve it for our future generation. From the point of view of purposeful sustainable development, understanding the contribution of man and civilisation as a whole, this aspect is the most interesting. All the methods and technologies that we studied, I considered from the point of view of application, what standards, laws, educational projects, experiments are needed for this. This is the sphere of my interests.

**Aziz:** incredibly important and interesting what you said. It's very relevant. Before the conversation, I thought I would be talking to a technical specialist, but you are talking with such an understanding of all these problems. I, as a humanitarian, can say that you understand very deeply the nature of essential problems and you don't have any pathos and you talk about very high matter, about civilisation, about culture and one can feel how much you understand it all. What is your initial education? Did you start with a technical education? Are you not a Muscovite?

**Vladimir:** I am a Muscovite. I have been living in Uzbekistan for almost a year and I may have already changed my accent. I was choosing between Uzbekistan and Israel. I got Israeli citizenship because I had the opportunity. Uzbekistan is incredibly accepting of people, just like Israel. For me, initially both maths and art were one part. I graduated from a music school, one of the best piano schools in Moscow, at the same time I was interested in the art part, I won Olympiads in maths, history and I don't see any contradiction. Encyclopaedic education means the harmony of these two sides, just like the harmony of physical development. The heritage of Greek philosophers is not wasted for me, it is the right way. An attempt to know culture through religion. How a nation feels and defines itself. This permeates the whole culture, the structure of a civilisation is determined by the religion in which it was formed. The study of these practices. As well as immersing yourself in martial arts practices. Managing fears. Overcoming internal barriers. Such were the difficult choices and at the end of 11th grade I was equally interested in going to MSU's Psychology of Personality and the technical faculty, and I found an experimental programme at the technical university called Medical and Biotechnical Apparatuses and Systems. Faculty of Radio Engineering. It was just a connection about human cognition and the limits of human capabilities, all the technical subtle sciences. And physics, which gives us an understanding of how the world really works. The desire to learn how it works and how it works was my first step. And then there was the rapid development of digital technologies. My first work was connected with the fact that while I was still at the institute, I assembled project teams for a distance learning system. I won a grant and a special scholarship from the largest Russian e-shop. And we produced a disc where we digitised all the textbooks and documentation on the design of radio-electronic devices. An experimental and interesting project. And then we created websites, worked with media, Internet digitisation and I got into a great team of scientists and engineers who created a commercial company and developed a technology for high-precision digitisation of works of art on the basis of aerospace photographic reconnaissance technologies. With quality control, with transmission control. We learnt how an image works digitally, how to reproduce it with the help of devices, how to turn what I see into an exact copy, and for this we need to know the physical processes and image registration at the matrix level. What digital processes take place in image processing and how to create a copy back from a digit. How to translate from 3 colours, which the computer understands, to the printer with 4 colours. And to get a facsimile result.

**Aziz:** it's the work of an artist.

**Vladimir:** it's quite a creative job. We worked with artists, especially when we digitised artists' works, they couldn't believe it, especially when you do it on the same watercolour paper. Then I became a producer and then a development director for the company and I was already doing media projects. When you get cool visual material and you want to show it to people and you realise that the best way to do that is through outreach projects. The pinnacle of my career was co-curating an exhibition for the 100th anniversary of the Pushkin Museum in 2012. After that, Irina Antonova invited me as Deputy Director for Information Technology to the Pushkin Museum. And I became the first IT Director in Russia. This position was specially opened for me, thanks to her persistence. At the time, there was not even a concept.

**Aziz:** she had to be convinced of that.

**Vladimir:** it came gradually. Thanks to the team and fine work, we won an international competition for websites and museums, created virtual exhibitions in 2011 and then in 2013 I moved to the museum. At the same time, the rector of the Higher School of Economics proposed to create on the basis of our company and on the basis of the Pushkin Museum the Chair of Information Technologies of Culture. Unfortunately, the chair is now closed and you won't even find the materials. My lectures remain on my YouTube channel, but the systematic work did not continue.

**Aziz:** Were you a pioneer in the post-Soviet space?

**Vladimir:** thanks to the Efos team and everyone who worked in this block. I became the main educator in this area. I realised that it needs to be communicated as well as possible, and apart from creating projects and products, education, training students and staff became more important to me. If an organisation doesn't have someone who can understand how it works, it won't work. I started training junior specialists and without training of top management and heads of ministries of culture - it is impossible to do it. In 2014, a very effective digital technology team from the Russian Ministry of Culture was formed, we helped each other a lot, then a council for the digital development of museums in Russia was set up, which I also chaired.

**Aziz**: Is this the first time you created it too? Was there such a council before you?

**Vladimir:** no. This council continues to work now under the management of my friend, partner and apprentice at the International Union of Museums. Then there were many programmes, and the key theme of the last few years has been innovation in high-tech business, and innovation and business in culture. I tried to combine the interests of the biggest companies and culture in order to get some kind of coloborate. Culture is always the cream of the development of the state and society, where money is given at the last moment, although it is the most important thing for society. It is either patronage, charity, or grants. The system of fundraising management, the creation of quality projects, presentations, projects that would develop its reputation, instil in people a taste for enlightenment, all this has become a key topic for me.

**Aziz:** how have you been received by the museum environment? There is a stereotype that they are quite conservative people, but you have completely new ideas and new technologies. Did they immediately realise the significance of this work?

**Vladimir:** it's a very complicated story. In 2000, digital technologies were perceived aggressively. The computer would replace the human being. Now people are worried that artificial intelligence will replace humans. It's a common talking point. I took it as a challenge to raise my rhetoric.

**Aziz:** you have done very well.

**Vladimir:** if people are afraid of something, and if it is not related to physical threats, then they don't know it. So you have to do education.

**Aziz:** is that why you started teaching?

**Vladimir:** of course. It's a vicious circle. You train a specialist who has to germinate, grow, get some positions, stay in this profession. It takes 8-9 years. While you have prepared programmes, while you have released bachelor's degrees, while people have realised this. The fastest step in implementing it in real practice is 7-8 years, you have to understand that. You can't change anything in six months. This is the long patience of teachers and you need to show the best innovative examples. I tried to make the Pushkin Museum a centre of innovation of digital technologies in museum activities. It worked. The team worked as efficiently as possible. Everyone wanted to be leaders in this respect, that is, to do such cool projects. This is a very important moment of inspiration. In museums, salaries are lower than in other industries, and at the same time, how can we gather the best specialists who will work for the cause, not for money? Only by inspiration, by example. This approach to the realisation of high-quality, uncompromising, innovative and good projects allowed us to assemble a team and inspire others to work.

**Aziz:** great. An analogy came to my mind. I thought of Nietzsche. He had a mental crisis once when the news came that the Louvre had burned down. It shocked him so much. Then it turned out to be a false report, but it was discussed for days. And digitisation is a way of preserving all that.

**Vladimir:** yes, when we talk about the technology of digital doubles of objects, which I have been working on with my colleagues and we worked in an international committee under methodological support, where there were specialists from Europe and Asia. There is such a manifesto, signed in 1861, which talks about preserving cultural heritage through the creation of copies. What we were doing was updating that to the digital world, 150 years later.

**Aziz:** Did they do that at the Pushkin Museum as well?

**Vladimir:** The Pushkin Museum is the epitome of a manifesto. This is not a new thing. Very often our culture is preserved through copies. We know much of Greek culture through late Roman copies. Much of the philosophers we know through Ottoman double translations. Much of painting we know through engravings that have survived or bas-reliefs. Reproduction of the best examples accompanies mankind throughout its existence. There are no eternal materials. In this sense, figures are one opportunity to make things for preservation. If you do a full analysis, using all the technologies, optical digitisation, 3D digitisation, it is possible to recreate the project as it is. There are such concepts as authenticity, antiquity of an object, but the concept of authenticity is the meaning. For example, in the Far East, the concept of authenticity implies place and meaning**.** If a temple in Japan is said to be 1000 years old, every nail and wood in it has long been replaced. What matters is its structure and place. Of course, a wooden palace cannot stand for 1000 years. What to call an original? The Russian school of restoration did not like to open the dark varnish, because it is time, it is an epoch. And there is the European, English school of restoration. You look at spoons that are 300 years old, and they shine like they were made yesterday. Or paintings. It's as if this painting has just been painted by an artist. It's unfamiliar. The fact that a real work evokes genuine feelings, and that's what distinguishes works of genius from mass-produced works, that's important. You can fall in love with a genuine work of art. It won't happen if you have a giant canvas in front of you that has no talent in it other than self-expression. It's a very subtle thing. And a topic I'm very interested in is the preservation of digital doubles, digital avatars of people. With the help of generative artificial intelligence you can quite recreate with a very high percentage of probability many people from the past and certainly you can make such a matrix of records, information, thoughts, like conversations of a person that his immortality becomes possible. That's one of the technologies that I'm doing. The more materials, and if someone will ever collect materials for the purpose of incarnating some person, this will be a very important element. There is no systematic work on this yet, but I hope that all my moves will be over and at some international university I will continue this theme.

**Aziz:** is that what you're interested in right now?

**Vladimir:** the time has come to this. Just as there was once a time when open data was discussed, but until the era of artificial intelligence arrived, people did not understand why. Even 10 years ago, I used to say at my lectures: guys, let's make open data catalogues, create high-quality digitisation, and provide access to it. When the artificial intelligence system develops to the necessary level, and if it does not connect to data sources, you will disappear from their field of interest. Which is what's happened now. I gave lectures in Tashkent about artificial intelligence. Since the source of open data on the culture of Uzbekistan is not high enough, the neural networks that do the searches do not see the culture of Uzbekistan well. And they pass it off as Turks or Indians. This is due to the extent to which information on cultural heritage and traditions is prepared, digitised and open**.** And for this purpose it is necessary that people should be able to describe qualitatively, enter into databases in a sufficient format, including in English, if you want to integrate into the international space. Quality digitisation from the right angles. And this era is now coming.

**Aziz:** we have the first steps.

**Vladimir:** it is very important that these first steps are being taken. The Culture Fund is supporting these projects; a state catalogue of the museum fund is being created. Every person involved in this process has realised that their work is very important, because further on it will be the property of the whole world. They think the following: why should I bother with this digitisation, what these people have come up with, they just don't see the whole process. If people do something unconsciously, they cannot do it accurately. You can't rewrite a book without understanding the language. There will be so many mistakes. It's going to be similar. That's a gigantic problem for old manuscripts. You tried to hire scribes who didn't know the language, and they would just draw similar.

**Aziz:** where did you give lectures in Tashkent?

**Vladimir:** with partners, we organised the Cultural Caravan project, which included a series of different lectures. The history of culture, among other things. Digital innovations for the development of society and culture, they are all available on our YouTube channel.

**Aziz:** I will watch it for sure.

**Vladimir:** invited to read at the Club Intellectual. About 15-20 public lectures. We started a lot of things with partners from Uzbekistan. Created an architectural design studio. Creating all types of comfortable spaces. If there is no comfortable space, in a museum, in a university or in schools, or in a house of culture or even in a factory, people will not be tuned in. It is very difficult for young people to be in a modern hall when there is a perfectly equipped café and an under-equipped cultural space. It becomes an obstacle for them. For me, the question of creating an architectural, intellectual and emotional environment is a very important factor. This is the kind of studio we have made. There are a lot of negotiations, but so far it hasn't come to a point. Everything that concerns technical innovations, the approaches I mentioned, it is important, but you have to do the basic things first.

**Aziz:** I'm interested in the question. I am discovering so many things. There is digitalisation going on. In a few years, the entire document flow will be digitised. What should historians of the future do? Historians have a concept called external source criticism. That is, we determine authenticity. Are there technologies for this? How can we determine that a document was created 50 years ago and not a week ago?

**Vladimir:** this is a crucial topic related to defence against fakes. Nowadays, it is possible to fake a photograph and anything else. One of the topics we are working on is digital passports for works of art and any objects. Historical and cultural objects. What's the point? When you have digitised an object, and you are a reputable institution, you can fix it with a kind of passport in the digital world. All this hype, crypto-technologies are all breakthrough technologies, connected with the fact that the main barrier of the digital world is being overcome, which is copying. This allows us to talk about creating digital originals. Next is the question of labelling. A physical object with its digital essence. Well, this is also developing. There are many options there. The creation of a sustainable authentic source is internet trust. Creating a trusted zone on the Internet, where there will be transparent sites, who made them, passports of works. We have now launched technologies to connect crypto-domains. That is, we have a traditional internet domain, and if you buy an art domain, you can activate a crypto domain as well. Your crypto wallet had a name, not abstract numbers. By making the traditional internet domain known by who bought it and when, you enter your passport details to purchase it, you have essentially created a bridge between "web 2" and "web crypto" technologies to own crypto wallets. Some are fighting for anonymity, but we think it is important in this segment to connect these worlds. I hope we will realise this project in the near future.

**Aziz:** You've calmed me down a little bit, or I was really worried about it.

**Vladimir:** it takes time. There are very few dialogues on this and I hope to develop it.

**Aziz:** let our shooting be a small contribution to it.

**Vladimir:** that's why I try to talk about it. So that people understand the importance.

**Aziz:** thank you very much. Our conversation is coming to an end, and I would like to ask you a question. You mentioned your sport. Is it karate? Is it related to your search?

**Vladimir:** in a way, yes. Not religious qigong and tsuan. Those are the 2 practices I do. Translated as "Truth on the Edge of Reality" and "Search for Authenticity". In the sense that you are trying to connect your body, mind, way of thinking to everything. Why is that so important to me? Next comes the practices. You can't be authentic if you have fears in you that are suffocating you. You can't show up the same way if you don't have a genuine respect for people and the world in you. You can't be whole if you behave one way with one and another way with another. And in this sense, the practice of martial arts through overcoming the limits of the body, through pride, through the ability to tolerate pain, to drive your fears from your consciousness, it all opens up opportunities for creative thinking, because a true artist is not afraid of anything. He may be afraid for someone, but he is not afraid for himself. He has no limitations. In this I found an opportunity through physical practice, through maintaining physical health, it is difficult to work 12 hours a day.

**Aziz:** You are a very whole person.

**Vladimir:** Martial arts practice is an integral part of what I do. Practices allow you to give back to yourself sometimes. You know what it means to finish to the end, to overcome yourself through fatigue, through pain. It's a battle with yourself. Then you get to the point where you've done all you can do. You didn't stop in the middle. And the same attitude should be in any scientist, researcher, any professional. What difference does it make what we develop a volitional exercise on. After the beginning level of martial arts, you move on.

**Aziz:** Do you see your future in Israel?

**Vladimir:** I work in the international space. I see a huge cross-section all over the world.

It's an amazingly interesting, inspiring project. I'm involved in supporting Art Therapy. There is a messianic part to it. In some countries, all proceeds from domain sales go to cultural and art charities. And now 10% of domain sales go to Art Therapy. As an independent expert researcher, connected with digital technologies and creation of architecture and creative spaces, I do not limit myself to one subject. Life is complicated and no one ever earns much in the cultural sector. It's important to have a job where you are in demand. It is not related to greed, but we are not billionaires. Where yourcompetence is, where your expertise is, and where your projects are visible, with nice people, we have only one life, and to waste it for nothing or for negativity.

**Aziz:** thank you very much for the interesting story and I sincerely wish you great success. Your success is the success of a large number of people.

**Vladimir:** my success is when we all develop together.