

Dear readers!

This is the next issue of «The Art of Eurasia» Journal, which we have decided to dedicate to the most important topic — artistic traditions and innovations. The main section of the issue, «Forum», is entirely devoted to this theme, but other articles and sections also deal with these issues to a greater or lesser extent. Art historians and artists are well acquainted with the subject of artistic traditions, but viewers in galleries and museums, and all lovers of the fine arts in general, know it mostly by hearsay. In elucidating the rationale behind the selection of this topic, I will present some insights.

The vast expanse of fine arts can be viewed from a bird's eye perspective as situated between two distinct poles: artistic traditions and the pursuit of novel themes and expressive techniques, as well as innovation in artistic creation. They were, are and will always be, and we can say: here is an example of high innovation, breakthroughs to new frontiers in art, and here is an example of complete adherence to traditions. They represent two extremes, both of which are exemplified by numerous other art phenomena.

To illustrate, the art of Ancient Egypt saw no significant change for centuries, with the existing canon remaining unaltered. However, the ascension to the throne of the pharaoh-reformer of the New Kingdom period, Ehnaton, led to a literal explosion of new art forms, which became known as the Amarna period. The symbol of the period was the portrait of Queen Nefertiti, who represented the ideal of beauty and perfection. A comparable phenomenon occurred relatively recently in the second half of the 19th century in France, where there was an extraordinary proliferation of art associated with the Impressionists and their successors, including P. Cézanne, P. Gauguin, V. van Gogh, A. Matisse, and others.

It is important to recall that A. Matisse, an eminent reformer in the field of art, experienced a profound sense of catharsis in front of Russian icons. He held the view that they represented the pinnacle of his artistic experience in Moscow, and was so moved by their beauty that he was literally torn from the icons and led out of the hall with Old Russian masterpieces. It is somewhat paradoxical that the reformer of all contemporary art forms and rules should claim that artists should draw inspiration from the Russian icon, given that it is a canonical art form with details, compositional schemes, attributes and symbols prescribed in advance for each depiction of a saint. It would appear that it is an extremely conservative and traditional art form that does not accept even a small amount of creativity or novelty. However, according to Matisse, the icon reveals one of the most significant mysteries — the soul of the people. This elusive concept consistently attracts true artists.

At the same time, not everything is unambiguous in this context. When approaching the pole of artistic tradition, we often encounter examples that are devoid of any emotional content, which can be perceived as mere shadows of art. Conversely, when moving to the opposite pole, we find instances where the primary focus is on the act

of experimentation itself, rather than the final outcome. In such cases, the role of the master is of paramount importance. For instance, the abstract drawings of cracks on a wall, the play of lines of clouds and water jets, were inspired by Leonardo da Vinci. In the 20th century, V. Kandinsky reached a certain maximum in this direction and, as many believe, exhausted the full potential of abstract art. It would be erroneous to assume that all artists who have embraced a new style have done so with complete conviction. There are, undoubtedly, many who have rushed into the breakthrough he discovered, but how many have truly discovered new forms that express the spirit and the idea, and have not simply become imitations or shadow-schemes?

This indicates that the focus is not on the form, style of art, or its evolution, but rather on the artist as the primary subject of analysis. In his studio, which serves as both a physical space for creativity and a space of the heart and imagination, a harmonious equilibrium between tradition and innovation emerges through the serendipitous discoveries and insights that arise from the joy and agony of creativity. It is not possible to articulate this phenomenon in words; however, it is more readily comprehensible when depicted in a visual format. Let us consider a hypothetical scenario in which a bowl is filled with a variety of substances and ingredients, resulting in the creation of a new substance of art. The outcome may be a painting, a sculpture, or even a mere sketch; the medium is inconsequential. It is crucial to acknowledge the significance of gratitude and devotion to one's predecessors in this metaphysical process. One must take into account not only how one's contemporaries will perceive you, but also strive to ensure that the exhausted Streltsy came to you — as V.I. Surikov recalled his visions — with gratitude and a bow. This entails a comprehensive understanding of the past, coupled with a keen anticipation of the future.

Many things will come together in the process of this amazing melting, many things will interfere — and not only worldly problems, but also the material itself will resist, as the outstanding theorist and the reformer of the art of the book V. Favorsky wonderfully said. Stamina and will, overshadowed by inspiration, will be the first assistants of the artist in this amazing process. Read more about it in the articles of our authors, who tell about the remarkable pages of Eurasian art.

**Mikhail Shishin,
Chief Editor**