

### **Dear Readers!**

Welcome to this latest issue of the “The Art of Eurasia” journal, which is dedicated to one of the most compelling and intricate themes: ‘Art and Architecture of the East Asian Region: From the Morphology of Styles to the Symbolism of Images’. In their research papers, compiled under the ‘Forum’ section, the authors have not only succeeded in examining lesser-known works of Eastern art, but have also unveiled their profound layers of meaning through art-historical and semantic analysis.

It is observable that the interest of both viewers and art historians in the semantics of artworks has recently intensified. Let us examine this phenomenon in greater depth. One segment of the audience is captivated by the perfection of artistic form, which evokes emotional elevation and profound aesthetic experiences. Works of this nature are abundant, particularly within design and applied arts. However, there is a growing cohort of those who perceive a work of art as a multi-tiered structure possessing deep semantic layers. By deciphering these levels, viewers recognise the author not merely as a craftsman, but as a wise interlocutor guiding them towards spiritual and intellectual discoveries.

Profound meanings are primarily anticipated from large-scale canvases and epic compositions. Nevertheless, a work that is modest at first glance can occasionally reveal a great deal to the viewer. A striking illustration of this is Henri Matisse’s masterpiece “Still-life. A Seashell on a Black Marble”, a jewel in the collection of the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts (Moscow). The master spent an astonishingly long time executioning this laconic work, which required thirty sessions. The table displays a simple assortment of objects: an elegant cup, a porcelain milk jug, a coffeepot, three apples, and an unexpected accent — a large shell from the southern seas. A painter of such calibre could have completed a similar still life in a single session. Instead, he laboured over it extensively, painstakingly rearranging the objects literally millimetre by millimetre in pursuit of an impeccable composition. This fact alone compels us to examine the still life more closely. The historical context of its creation is equally vital — the year 1940, a period of profound adversity. The artist had narrowly managed to flee Paris by train under bombardment, compounded by his advanced age and illnesses. The familiar world was collapsing, invaded by something alien and destructive. The shell on the table came to embody this foreign object. If one were to mentally omit it, a cosy domestic corner would emerge; the remaining elements are rendered so convincingly that the viewer can almost perceive the aroma of coffee with milk, enhanced by the freshness of the fragrant green apples. Yet, the sharp protrusions of the shell have already dug into the table, transforming the black surface into a volatile, all-consuming, and destructive murk. It appears that in another moment, this dark space will engulf the snow-white cup along with everything else. One of the apples, as if thrust aside by the shell, has already been pushed beyond the boundary of the canvas...

It is widely acknowledged that a creative individual embeds far more into an artwork than they consciously realise at the moment of creation. Within it, the author’s life experience, a complex socio-cultural context, and personal tribulations implicitly converge. For this very reason, we have selected a photograph of the doors of

a unique temple within the Amarbayasgalant Buddhist monastery complex in Mongolia as the visual epigraph to this issue's theme. Every detail within their decoration is highly symbolic. Indeed, a door itself always embodies the concept of a threshold, demarcating the mundane space from the sacred. Any work of art functions as a similar boundary: beneath its visible, tangible form lies a profound semantic space. It is within this realm that enduring ideas, symbols, and values reside, and such masterpieces are exceedingly abundant across the expanses of Eurasia. It is these works that our journal seeks to explore.

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Chief Editor