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СПЕЦИФИКА РАЗВИТИЯ ИСКУССТВА В ПОВОРОТНЫЕ МОМЕНТЫ ИСТОРИИ (НА ПРИМЕРЕ ВИЗАНТИЙСКОЙ ИМПЕРИИ И ОСМАНСКОЙ ИМПЕРИИ)

Ключевые слова: история искусства, переходные периоды, самооценка, руины.

Аннотация: автор отмечает, что в сложные исторические моменты искусство не только реагирует на происходящее, но и может помочь найти выход из кризисной ситуации. Рассмотрению данного вопроса и посвящена статья.

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THE SPECIFICS OF DEVELOPMENT OF ART AT TURNING POINTS OF HISTORY ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE AND THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

Keywords: art history, transitional periods, self-esteem, ruins.

Abstract: in difficult historical times Art not only responds to what is happening, but may also help to find a way out of the crisis. And this article is dedicated to the consideration of this very issue.

More often than not we find ourselves at the crossroads of times when the so-called transitional periods arise. External circumstances could develop in such a way that the usual norms of behavior may no longer apply forcing us to leave our comfort zone and changing our habitual way of life, which, without any doubt, may deeply affect our psychological state. So, it is no surprise that such metamorphoses cannot but impact on Art that, as we all know, is extremely sensitive to events and occurrences taking place in the World.

On the one hand, the importance of the continuity of cultural traditions cannot be underestimated. For instance, according to Thomas Mathews, Late Antiquity portraits of pagan gods are the forerunners of Christian icons made using same technique, namely, they were painted in encaustic (see Fig. 1.) using heated wax which could be

colored and applied to thin pieces of wood to create life-like images [1, p. 99]. Moreover, I cannot help but agree with Judith Herrin who in her book «Byzantium: The Surprising Life of a Medieval Empire» states that all the ancient practices were reproduced in the veneration of icons, in other words, they were «kissed and adored; candles and lamps with incense were burnt in front of them; and prayers were addressed to the holy persons represented» [1, p. 116]. Furthermore, the Seljuks, who defeated the Byzantine army at the Battle of Manzikert that took place on the 26th of August, 1071, adopted the double-headed eagle from Byzantium; and it is believed that the architecture of Hagia Sophia served as an inspiration for many Ottoman mosques, such as the Blue Mosque in Istanbul [1, p. 316].

On the other hand, there has been a tendency to erase the past aiming to eliminate all its traces. And in this regard, one should not forget about the phenomenon of iconoclasm when people destroyed the images they previously honored on the pretext that the icons were no longer effective and failed to protect Christian believers. However, in a twist of fate, when iconoclasm was denounced, iconophiles (such as Empresses Irene and Theodora), in their own turn, ordered all iconoclast texts to be eliminated. And subsequently, figural paintings and mosaics, which had been whitewashed over or covered up, were restored, including the apse decoration of St. Sophia in Constantinople which was renewed with a mosaic of the enthroned Virgin and Child [1, p. 113].



Fig. 1. «Shade» by Jasper Johns (wood, metal, encaustic and canvas)

Interestingly enough, for some reason or other, conflicting trends could coexist quite harmoniously. Suffice it to mention the interior décor of the Basilica of Sant'Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna, namely, the mosaic representation of the Palace built by the Ostrogothic leader Theoderic who considered himself the protector of Arianism. Later, when the Goths were defeated, Bishop Agnellus rededicated Theoderic's church to the Orthodox cult and replaced the ruler's portrait by golden mosaics of himself with Emperor Justinian. And yet, traces of the original Arian mosaic still remain in the Palace section of Saint'Apollinare Nuovo; and if we look closely at the columns of the Palace, we will see surviving hands once connected to saintly bodies deleted in Byzantine times [1, p. 67].



Fig. 2. «Ruins» by Roy Lichtenstein (The Marble Palace, St. Petersburg)

It is a well-known fact that the political decline of Rome was matched by the rise of Ravenna, which for nearly two centuries functioned as the Byzantine capital of the West. Nevertheless, when Ravenna fell under Lombard control in 751, the Bishop of Rome decided to negotiate an alliance with the Frankish leader, Pippin. Although the latter agreed to protect Rome from the Lombards, his son Charlemagne plundered Ravenna's classical columns and capitals for building material to use in his new capital

at Aachen, and what is more, Theoderic's equestrian statue (now lost) was also removed there [1, p. 69]. And eventually, Ravenna's trade with Mediterranean, as well as its connections with Constantinople, were inherited by Venice.

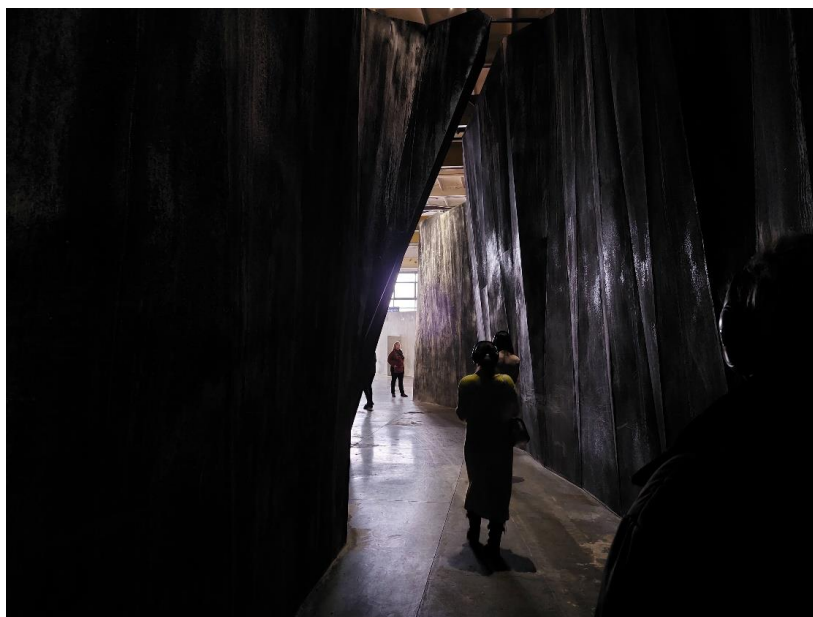


Fig. 3. The Tunnel (The Sevcable Port, St. Petersburg)

Constantinople itself was captured by Sultan Mehmed II in 1453. Yet the Ottoman Empire itself did not last long and collapsed in 1922. And, according to the Turkish Nobel prize-winning novelist Orhan Pamuk, it is sadness («hüzün») of an irretrievably gone greatness of the country that unites millions of people residing in Istanbul [2, p. 120]. On the one hand, there are those who simply love watching fires, suffice it to mention Emperor Nero, Théophile Gautier, or Ahmet Tanpinar. Even Orhan Pamuk in his book «Istanbul: Memories and The City» writes that in November of 1960 he watched the Bosphorus fire, caused by the collision of two oil tankers, all night until the morning with great delight [2, p. 268]. On the other hand, the sight of the blackened ruins of the palaces, once greatly admired for their exquisite designs, cannot but affect the self-esteem of the people living in close proximity to them (see Fig. 2.). Unlike European countries, where historical buildings are protected as museum treasures, Istanbulites simply dwell among those ruins, which serve as a reminder that the former greatness and wealth are gone, leaving them with poverty and confusion [2, p. 127]. There are those who leave for other countries in search of a better life, but it seems to

me that emigrant's longing for the lost homeland is no better than Orhan Pamuk's «hüzün». That is to say, no matter how well a person knows the language of the country he (or she) has moved to or how much he (or she) admires its culture, they will always feel that they do not truly belong there, as confirmed by the memoirs of the Russian emigrants, such as Felix Yusupov, Vladimir Nabokov, Nikolai Benois, etc.

To sum it up, I would like to underline the fact that Art not only reflects the époque in which it was created, but it can also show us the way out of the complex situations in which we might find ourselves in these difficult times. I quite agree with Sting who in one of his interviews says that the structure of modern music is too simple: the bridge, a section that provides contrast to the rest of the composition, disappeared, and it seems that you are walking in a circle without getting any relief. And I suppose it is no coincidence that the exhibition, dedicated to the creativity of the Russian film director Aleksei Balabanov, which took place at the Sevcable Port in St. Petersburg, was organized in such a manner that one could see a glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel – an installation commemorating the actor Sergei Bodrov Jr. who died in the Kolka-Karmadon rock ice slide when shooting his film «The Messenger» (see Fig. 3.). Yet despite the fact that from time to time we may face unpleasant issues, even things we do not like might help us to rediscover and redefine our cultural identity.

Acknowledgements

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