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Lyricism as a Style-Forming Trait of Landscape Paintings by Valentyn Zakharchenko

Ліризм як стильотворча риса пейзажного живопису Валентина Захарченка

Abstract. The article covers the landscape paintings by Valentyn Zakharchenko, an Odesa-based artist, on the late 20th through the early 21st century. The main features of his individual manner are outlined. The methodology of the research is based on the application of complex, biographical, comparative methods of art study analysis. Valentyn Zakharchenko's creativity is based on the quintessence of impressionistic and realistic features in the manner, as well as the undeniable influence of teachers, first of all, Valery Geghamyan, along with the other Eastern Ukrainian painters of the late nineteenth century. But, despite the presence of many components that influenced the formation of the creative person of the artist, his artistic language was reborn in a completely independent, individual style, which is inherent in diversity: Zakharchenko's portrait, narrative painting differs significantly in the manner of performance from the landscape painting, in which lyricism as a component that defines an emotional state, mood, and color choice is the keynote.

Keywords: Valentyn Zakharchenko, Odesa School of Painting, landscape genre, color scheme, lyricism, impressionism, painting texture, formula.

Problem statement. Paintings of the Odesa school is currently one of the most promising topics for research. The serious research on the subject, nevertheless, started only after Ukraine became an independent state, that is a couple of decades ago, therefore there is a rather small number of works on the problem. Creativity of individual representatives of the school has not been studied at all, despite the personal contribution of each of the artists to shaping the general nature of not only the Odesa artistic field, but also overall Ukrainian cultural and art life, as Odesa artistic processes have always been a very important component of the all-Ukrainian cultural environment. The Odesa-based painter Valentyn Zakharchenko, born in 1949, is among such artists. It is particularly topical to cover his works in the context of the current cultural climate, when a lot of new artistic trends, directions, forms, techniques, complete freedom of expression for artists along with positive achievements, unfortunately, tend to sharply decrease the professional level of art. The masters of the old school, which Valentyn Zakharchenko undoubtedly belongs to, are significantly qualitatively different from the majority of modern masters—by the level of professionalism. The works of such masters should be carefully preserved and their creativity should be popularized.

Analysis of recent research works and publications. In the realm of modern Ukrainian art studies, there are very

few studies that would shed light on the work of Valentyn Zakharchenko: neither monographs nor scientific articles can be found about him, except for some individual works [4; 11]. Therefore, the idea of the creative manner of the master, the main milestones of his creative biography may be formed by taking into account every single detail. Based on the tools of the iconographic method, in an effort to create a comprehensive picture of the artist's creative path in the context of the development of the school and Ukrainian art in general, useful data can be found in sources on the Ukrainian art of the 1960s [1; 10], the Odesa artistic environment [6], the phenomenon of Ukrainian nonconformism, which has recently begun to be studied thoroughly. It may already be stated that there are fundamental scientific works on this issue: O. Kotov [7, 8], L. Medvedev [9], V. Petrashyk, V. Pukhyrev, V. Savchenko [12], O. Tarasenko, O. Fedoruk, etc.

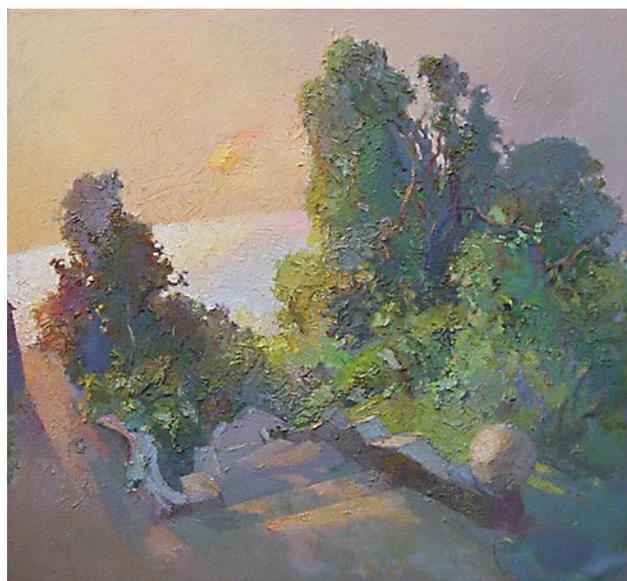
Objectives of the study. The process of the introduction of the artist's name into the scientific circulation is only gaining momentum, therefore, the actualization of his works, their popularization and proof of their significance are the main tasks of contemporary art studies aimed at the analysis of the Ukrainian fine art.

Presentation of the main research material. Any attempt to analyze Valentyn Zakharchenko's oeuvre has elements of scientific novelty, since Ukrainian art historians have

not yet done comprehensive research on the phenomenon of his painting. Such analysis is significant, if not necessary for understanding the nature of the Ukrainian fine arts and for the full coverage of all stages of the evolution of Ukrainian painting. The figure of the artist still remains out of focus and thorough research, and it has an explanation: Zakharchenko is a very reserved, modest man who devoted himself to art, not to his own PR, which makes it difficult to urge the artist to popularize his works. For him, art is not a means, but a goal. Zakharchenko never positioned himself as a public figure, he was in the shadow of more skillful and dexterous peers, so his creative path is not characterized by breaking events.

Born in Zhytomyr Oblast (Malyn town, 1949) [3], the artist connected almost all of his conscious life with Odesa: in 1972 he entered the Odesa State Pedagogical Institute and became a part of the Odesa artistic life ever since. We emphasize that Valentyn Zakharchenko is a graduate of the Graphic Department, which means that he is a priori an academic drawing artist, which is why it should come as no surprise that over time the artist has become one of the pillars of academic education, a true art school, which is sadly disappearing at present. Any personality of the artistic circle is formed, first of all, based on the model, choosing a standard for himself/herself. Therefore, the period of creative formation is the basis for the future of individual style. Zakharchenko was delighted: his teacher was M. Morozov, but there was another personality who made an incredible influence on his formation, was very close spiritually and personally—it was the legendary Valery Geghamyan. Young Zakharchenko entered a very narrow circle of people who had the privilege of closer communication with Geghamyan, because Geghamyan was very strict and reserved, not letting casual people in. It was even more surprising, since Zakharchenko and Geghamyan are absolutely different in their artistic tastes and manifestations; they have quite different individual manners of drawing and painting, and their tempers were not alike as well. Probably, there were several reasons for their contingency: firstly, Valentyn Zakharchenko became a student of Faculty of Graphic Arts being a well-formed mature person, already having a college education; secondly, the pedagogical talent of Valery Geghamyan accurately determined talent and focus on the art of young Zakharchenko, and, as you know, nothing impressed Geghamyan more than an inseparable worship to art. Over time, sympathy grew into a touching, extremely tactful friendship that lasted until Geghamyan's death.

The outstanding artistic and pedagogical skills of Zakharchenko himself were confirmed at the official level, which happened on rare occasions in those years: after graduation, the artist remained a lecturer at the Institute he graduated from. He taught such specialty courses as painting and composition [3; 11]. Since 1990, the artist has begun working in the well-known Grekov Odesa Art school, where he taught painting and tried to educate a new generation of artists who replaced the famous Sixtiers. They became the discovery of the artistic world of the last century.



1. V. Zakharchenko. *Night is Falling*. 2006. Oil on canvas

The artist has participated in the collective projects since 1974, still he has had few personal exhibitions (Lutsk, Donetsk, 2008, Odesa, 2007–2008) [11]. Although Zakharchenko's works are in the art collections of several cities of Ukraine and Russia, the exhibition activity of the artist cannot be called very fruitful, he did not have enough time or desire for it. Perhaps there were both reasons resulting from the natural modesty of the artist. Zakharchenko's name became known a little better only in 2013, but this popularity took a toll on him. The name of the artist became known not only to specialists but also to ordinary Ukrainians due to the history of the destruction of one of the most significant, iconic canvases [4], which the master himself had to cut off into parts at the end of 2012, so that it could be carried out from the house that had to be demolished. It was the famous *The Blind Ones*, painted back in the 1978, but it attracted attention only 30 years later. The tragedy of our society has always been in appreciating something only when it is lost. This case was no exception. The work can be renewed, restored, but it requires time, money, appropriate conditions, effort and, most importantly, desire. Moreover, the artist himself should find desire for the restoration of what he himself was forced to destroy, which is not easy.

Zakharchenko works in different genres, though he shows preference for the technique of oil painting. We may find some subject paintings among his creative works (triptych *The Blind Ones*, 1975; *The Last Supper*, 1980; *The Drummer*, 1985), and portraits (*The Portrait of a Woman*, 1974; *The Portrait of the Poet V. Petrenko*, 1985; *The Portrait of the Artist M. Zaluzhny*, 1992; *The Girl*, 1998), and still lifes [11]. His style was formed not only under the influence of direct teachers, but also under the works of the other southern Ukrainian artists. Impressionism has become the landmark, which always defined the manner of the master. It is worth emphasizing that Zakharchenko's picturesque style in portraits or subject paintings is fundamentally different from the tools he uses as a landscape painter. The researchers sometimes may trace Velazquez's



2. V. Zakharchenko. *Spring Day*. 2008. Oil on canvas

notes [11] in some of his portraits, as they are characterized by passion, energy, sharpness, hot palette, while in others even the mood of Goya [4] is noticed, demonstrated by the approach to tenebrism, the noisy language of painting, the courage and contrast, while in the genre of landscape the artist's style of painting is closer to impressionists; it is soft and tender. Zakharchenko is an excellent colorist, he has a high level of not only the technique of painting, but also the mastery of the composer. It is the organization of the space of the painter's landscape that draws attention to typical solutions. The compositional patterns of landscape paintings are distinguished by either very artificially low (which happens occasionally), or high line of the horizon. The latter contributes to the sense of the presence of air, free breathing in the space of the canvas, freshness and freedom. It's noteworthy, that the author often prefers a square format, which gives the works balance.

Landscape painting of the artist is perceived through lyrics: in the images of nature he usually prefers light, pure colors, almost does not use clear black, rarely resorts to dark spots. That is, the techniques of landscape painting of the artist can be called purely impressionistic, they demonstrate, that the artist is allured to plein-air painting, freshness and lightness, lyricism and softness of his landscapes, primarily marine ones (*Apricot in Blossom*, 1995; *At the Seaside*, 2000; *Autumn Coast*, 2002). These works contrast with the sharpness of the flamboyant *The Blind Ones*, or *The Girls*. Apparently, only occasionally in the lyrical and even melancholy landscapes of the artist one can notice the features of some trouble, more dynamism: *Night over the Sea* (2002). In the vast majority of cases, he softly enjoys all the nuances of light, the brush was as if breathing the sea air, conveying its mood (*Night is Falling*, 2006, Fig. 1).

In Zakharchenko's landscapes it is easy to see the echo of lyricism of Murashko, Vasylykivskiy, Kostandi. In a number of works, which are distinguished by the tendency to flatness and even decorativeity, it is impossible not to notice the tint

of the influence of Kuindzhi. The paintings by Zakharchenko are often done in a sketchy style, "in one breath". Even if the final brush strokes of the compositions were done in the workshop, the viewer does not see this length of refinement, his/her eye can only admire the fast, etude landscape, "captured" state of nature. The painting is textured, the stroke of the paintbrush is thick, sprawly, bold, the artist often resorts to local spots, which adds a little bit of decorative character, facilitates generalization and eliminates the risk of shredding the image. In combination with large-sized canvases (over a meter on the larger side), it gives the impression of solitude and lightness, relaxedness, freedom that is inherent in marine landscapes.

The main theme across the entire array of landscape painting is the marine motif: the artist cannot deny himself the pleasure of showing the glow of the sea surface at least a little, even when he focuses on other things—blossoming trees, changes in the state and mood of light, transiency of a certain time of a day or a season. The sea is an amulet of the artist, his permanent constant, which inspires, determines freedom of breath of the brush, lightness of painting.

Among Zakharchenko's favorite creative tasks are experiments with light, which he studies, as if preparing with a brush, trying to reflect the finest transitions of nature from state to state, emotional nuances, momentum, and the variability of natural mood, therefore, it often turns to an over-complex task—capturing twilight or dawn when light disappears very fast. It is impossible to "catch" a mood without having much experience and brave talent. To succeed in solving such a problem, one needs a great deal of experience working en plein air, which is inherent for the artist who spent most of his life in a seaside city. The artist, tending to the subtle transient states of nature, prefers more volatile periods, that is spring or autumn. He impressionistically delights the viewer with the subtleties of his mood (*November*, 2000; *Autumn Coast*, 2002; *Spring Day*, 2008, Fig. 2).

Air has always been one of the independent protagonists of landscape paintings by V. Zakharchenko. It has been not just a tool, a compulsory accompaniment, an element of a particular composition, but also a completely separate segment of each landscape. This is also due to the attraction of the painter to the low line of the horizon: the composition is full of light, air, fresh breath, purity, lyricism (*Apricot in Blossom*, 1995; *Moonlit Night*, 1996; *Autumn Coast*, 2002; *Spring Day*, 2008). It is a kind of intentional, deliberate speculation with a non-standard formula for admiring the multi-layeredness, transparency, richness of air, full of light. Contrasts are found in rare cases, so in landscape patterns, soft lyricism prevails.

Conclusions. Zakharchenko's creativity is not only a separate, independent artistic phenomenon, but an organic component of the overall Ukrainian cultural space. The systematization of information about the style of the artist, the artistic language, and the tools of painting techniques belong to the corpus of actual and perspective tasks of the contemporary Ukrainian art, which must be enriched with these observations, instead of being ignored or lost.

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Жадейко О.

Ліризм як стильотворча риса пейзажного живопису Валентина Захарченка

Анотація. Висвітлено пейзажний живопис Валентина Андрійовича Захарченка, одеського художника другої половини ХХ — початку ХХІ століття; охарактеризовано основні риси його індивідуальної манери. Методологія дослідження базується на застосуванні комплексного, біографічного, компаративного методів мистецтвознавчого аналізу. Творчість Валентина Захарченка має в основі квінтесенцію імпресіоністичної й реалістичної рис у манері, а також безперечний вплив учителів, перш за все, Валерія Гегамяна, й східноукраїнських художників кінця ХІХ століття. Самостійному, індивідуальному стилю В. Захарченка притаманне розмаїття: його портретний, сюжетний живопис значно відрізняється за манерою виконання від пейзажного, крізь який червоною ниткою проходить ліризм — компонент, що визначає емоційний стан, настрої, колористичне вирішення.

Ключові слова: Валентин Захарченко, одеська школа живопису, пейзажний жанр, ліризм, імпресіонізм, фактура живопису, композиційне рішення.

Жадейко А.

Лиризм как стилеформирующая черта пейзажной живописи Валентина Захарченко

Аннотация. Освещена пейзажная живопись Валентина Андреевича Захарченко, одесского художника второй половины ХХ — начала ХХІ века, охарактеризованы основные черты его индивидуальной манеры. Методология исследования базируется на применении комплексного, биографического и компаративного методов искусствоведческого анализа. Подмечено, что в основе творчества В. Захарченко лежит квинтэссенция импрессионистической и реалистической манер; также неоспоримо влияние учителей, в первую очередь Валерия Гегамяна, и восточноукраинских художников конца ХІХ века. Для самостоятельного, индивидуального стиля В. Захарченко характерно разнообразие: портретная, сюжетная его живопись значительно отличается по манере исполнения от пейзажной. Через последнюю красной нитью проходит лиризм — компонент, определяющий эмоциональное состояние, настроение, колористическое решение.

Ключевые слова: Валентин Захарченко, одесская школа живописи, пейзажный жанр, лиризм, импрессионизм, фактура живописи, композиционное решение.