

The Social Space of the Mari People Culture in Fine Arts of 1950-80s and the Forms of its Relevant Representation

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Abstract: The overview of the research project of the Russian Scientific Humanitarian Foundation “The Mari People’s Ethno-cultural Space in Fine Arts of the Mari Republic in 1950-80s” is given in the study. The regional phenomenon of art is presented as a form of the ethnic and cultural reflection of the Mari culture. The analysis is based on the structural-semiotic model developed. The results of the study of one of the elements, namely the social space to be the most significant segment of culture for the period of the nation’s history are given. In the 1st place, at this stage, the collision of the Soviet ideological and national-romantic foundations is revealed. This resulted in the mangled representation of the Mari people’s past and the idealised interpretation of socialist system creation in the Mari rural areas, however, national Neoromanticism gave rise to the interest to the traditional Mari culture and gave the representation of several cultural archetypes, not having lost their artistic relevance to this day. The representation of the family space is an attempt to synthesise the two tendencies: a family is shown as an ethnic ‘cell’ of the Soviet society. The two main types of the Soviet era a national intellectual and a rural worker are depicted in the space of the culture subject. Both types are widely represented and they create a general image of the Mari people at the stage of late socialism. The practical aspects of the research and the work on electronic thematic catalogue are covered in the study.

Key words: Ethnic and cultural space of the Mari, Soviet fine arts of the 1950-80s, collision archetypes, socialism, stages

INTRODUCTION

The study of the ethnic and cultural processes and their origins is quite indispensable for creating a steady inter-ethnic environment in the multinational state. Art as a ‘mirror’ of any culture is focused not on the reflection in its entirety in correlation of its ideals and aspirations with the realities of life and thus cultural analysis of the art work can give us much for understanding the ethnic and cultural processes.

Russia’s people’s professional art, the Mari people, in particular, appeared at the beginning of the 20th century. Over the century of its development, it has passed along several stages and at the turn of 20-21st centuries the Mari art produced the vivid artistic phenomena such as ethno-futurism.

From the point of view of institutional and aesthetic formation of fine arts of the Mari nation, the post-war, post-Stalin Soviet period of 1950-80s appeared to be very significant. In 1961, the Mari branch of the Union of Artists of the Russian SFSR was founded and systematic institutionalisation work on the fine arts in the Mari Region was started. This stage contains the collision of

two cultural trends: the ideological and the ethnic one. On the one hand, the nation’s culture was building up and on the other hand, the modernisation and the Soviet ideology was leading the culture away from the traditional mental foundations of the ethnicity. Nevertheless, directly from this period of time the relevant for contemporary artistic culture of the Mari, Neomythology addressed the original sources of the Mari ethnic group. Establishing Mari fine art as an ethnic and cultural phenomenon took place under the powerful influence of and in line with Russian art, created the foundation for the advent of the national artists of a certain kind. Consequently, the art as a ‘territory’ of the international world and cooperation demands the study of the art of the Mari Territory of the Soviet period in the specified context.

Created at this stage, the works of art exhibit the mature artistic level, they represent the cultural heritage of the Republic of Mari El. They can and ought to contribute to the development of cultural tourism in the region, since as they captured the most significant events and social transformations of that time of the personality having generated the image of the region’s culture. It is essential to make a research of those events and to give their

interpretation to study the materials of the Mari Republic museums to arrange them for wide application in cultural and educational sphere.

All these problems are being solved within the framework of the research project “ethno-cultural space of the Mari nation in Fine Arts of Mari Region in 1950-80s” carried out with the financial support of the Russian Humanitarian Science Foundation (No. 15-14-12001). The main objective of the project is to study the professional fine art of Mari Region in the Soviet period of time (1950-80s) as a form of ethnic and cultural reflection. The subject of the study is the representation forms and methods of the ethnic and cultural space of the Mari people in works of art of this period. The object of the analysis were art materials from the collections of the leading museums in the Republic of Mari El-T. Evseev National Museum of the Republic of Mari El and the Republican Museum of Fine Arts.

Literature review: The studies in the field of Soviet art to be worth mentioning belong to Degot (2000), Golomshtok (1994) and Gunther (2000), etc. These authors propose a new conceptual perspective of the history of 20th century Russian art. They are focused on the search for distinctive features of Russian modernisation and art under totalitarianism (Golomshtok, 1994) and producing a socio-psychological and anthropological portrait of man under socialism. These researchers reintroduce in the history of art the Soviet underground and previously forbidden names of artists including those whose creative work was related to the expression of ethnic identity.

Kruglova’s practice to apply the methods of social and cultural anthropology to study the Soviet art seems to be quite interesting. She writes that the analysis of socialist realism using the methods of structuralism and post-structuralism has revealed in this art “the features of the archaic, folk and mythological and religious structures of the collective irrationality which allowed them to interpret social realism as rooted in the culture and not arbitrarily constructed with power”. This conclusion makes it possible to raise the problem of researching the archetypal contents of art of the social realism epoch in the ethnic region.

The period of 1950-80s in the Mari art has been studied, mainly, from the standpoint of socialist realism. The researcher who studied fine art of the peoples of the Soviet Union for decades is naturally from the standpoint of socialist realism. However, with the fall of the set from above the Soviet ideological attitude, she takes the studies of the processes of national identity search and transformations of the artistic language in ethno-regional variations of fine arts in the post-Soviet space. The

leading experts in the specified period of time in Mari El are L.A. Kuvshinskaya in 1981; V.G. Kudryavtsev in 2010; G.I. Prokushev in 2003. Their methodology can be described as traditional academic: these are the methods of historical, biographical and art analysis.

It should be noted that in the past two decades, the local scientists were largely drawn to those events of Mari art history which were under a ban in the Soviet times. Therefore, there are quite numerous Soviet publications about art of Mari Territory of 1950-80s, today’s publications are virtually none. The latest summerising edition describing the history of the Mari fine arts was released in 1992.

Thus, there is a need to reexamine Mari El fine arts of the period of mature (late) socialism and apply the new methodological paradigms to that time. This time span as a stage of ethno-national professional fine arts formation of the Mari people reflecting their ideology is proposed to examine.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research methodology is based on the cultural approach developed in the works of Russian scientists M.S. Kagan, Yu.M. Lotman and other scientists. Nowadays, this approach is being developed by Krivtsov (2011), Flier (2008), Khrenov (2015) and others. In this regard, art is considered to be a systemic element of culture as a form of culture self-knowledge and self-awareness. Thus, ethno-national art is a systematic element of the ethno-national culture, its ‘mirror’, focused in the first place on the reflection of its ethnic and cultural issues and mental constants. The term ‘ethnonational’ refers in this case to the professional status of the ethnic phenomenon on the assumption of the ethnic nation as an ethnic group being at the stage of the modernised society with the people as a civil nation.

Cultural identity has been recorded in the belief system and values of the nation. Based on the data on the traditional nation’s spatial thinking and the pieces of the Mari fine arts works the structural and semiotic model of ethnic and cultural space of the Mari people has been developed and theoretically justified (Kolcheva, 2015). The model has been tested in the studies of Mari fine arts of 1920-30s and its effectiveness has been proven (Bolshova and Kolcheva, 2013). The model includes the following elements:

- Geographical area of the ethnic culture (represented in landscape and genre art)
- Social space at the community level (“mer” (the Mari language) society, community) (in historical, genre art in agricultural and landscape genre)

- Social space of the family level (in architectural landscape, genre, still life and interior genre)
- The level of the cultural space subject (in the genre, interior, costume, still life, portrait genre)
- Imaginary (mythological and ideological) level pervading all the above levels

The model of ethnic and cultural space proposed cannot be rigidly fixed. If necessary it can be supplemented, for example, by information and sign space or in some other way. Some levels can be revised in the light of the characteristics of the particular era. For instance in the case of Soviet art, we should touch upon not only the social space of the ethnic culture, structured according to the traditional world view but the social and historical space, for historical reflection of which artistic tools take significant place in the works of artists of that time period.

Finally, this model of ethnic and cultural space, due to its simplicity and universalism can be used in the studies of fine art of other Russia's ethnic groups.

Some levels of social space of the Soviet period Mari culture since they exactly have undergone the greatest transformation and have been vividly reflected in Mari fine art of that time.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Social and historical space of the Mari people in fine art of Mari territory in 1950-1980s: The cultural space of society is a complex phenomenon, therefore, it is represented in fine art of that time by a variety of genres. However, the historical genre because of its immense ideological significance held the leading position in socialist realism, therefore with regard to the representation of the social space in the pictorial art of the late Soviet period we should speak about the social and historical space. We start the description of the work with the review of the historical subjects in art.

On the one hand, the artists' call was to devote all their works to the matter of socialist society building following the immutable canons of Soviet art, on the other hand, the Mari ASSR artists in the historical picture strived to reflect the ethnic and cultural feature, often referring to the historically authentic events having influenced on the fate of the Mari people. However, the powerful influence of the official ideology used to result in the distorted and trivial representation of the past.

In 1950-80s, the Mari ASSR artists have captured with their creativity many stages of Mari history, beginning with the period of Mari Land joining the Russian state. However, there are no works on the

preceding periods, except for the nontemporal images of the ancient Mari heroes, famous for the ancient legends (Podmaryov Onar in 1964; Kozmin V.M. Chotkar-patyr in 1967; Mikhailin Chotkar-patyr in 1976). It is conditioned not only by the lack of historically reliable data on the ancient and medieval history of the Mari but also by the fact that in those times, the Mari exerted strong resistance to the Russian expansion. The artists chose to 'remain silent' on those Mari-Russian relations, so as not to go against the established concept of the 'peoples' friendship'. These works should be referred more to the genre of folklore and mythological rather than a historical one, they arose in the wake of national neo-romanticism and they are representations of the cultural archetype of the Mari hero-liberator.

When reflecting the later periods of Mari history, the artists, as a rule, adhered to the half-truth and were forced to follow the prevailing ideological policies. While depicting the era of Mari Land joining Russia (The middle of the 16th century) they paid attention to only one of its episodes to be the entry of the Highland Mari people into the Russian state (Pushkov A.S. The Mari Ambassadors Visiting Ivan the Terrible in 1957; Mikhailin I.M., Yefimov E.V. The Beginning of Brotherhood in 1983; Reunion in 1984; Osokin G.M. Akpars in 1984 and others). At the same time, the artists followed the Soviet historians' conclusions who believed that the Highland Mari, allegedly, to have voluntarily joined the Russian state, to 'get rid of the Tatar yoke'. The plots of the Cheremis Wars of the second half of the 16th century, for obvious reasons were ignored.

The Mari artists could not go past the theme of the joint class struggle of the Mari and Russian peasants in the 17-18th centuries amid the Razin uprising (Mamaev I.I. Miron Mumarin on the Volga in 1963) and Pugachevshchina (Atlashkina E.D., Vasilieva M.M. Pugachev in Kozhla-Sola in 1956. Mamaev I.I. Akpatyr in 1961. Osokin G.M. Meeting of Pugachev in the Mari Village in 1975-78). The artists depicted the ideal images of the leaders and members of the peasant movement as the noble heroes and the people's defenders, although according to the historical sources they were known to have been not much different from general robbers. The artists turned to the subject of daily life in the 17-18th century. For example, P.T. Gorbunsov in his painting "Kremlin" in 1963 showed the ancient Tsarevokokshaisk (now Yoshkar-Ola) from the bird's-eye view. However, the centuries are interfused on the canvas: we see a wooden fortification, completely burnt down in 1697 simultaneously with the stone churches (Ascension and Trinity churches) built in the town only in the middle of the 18th century.

The daily life of the 19th early 20th centuries was depicted with some criticism. The artists tried to show that before the 1917 revolution, Mari Land was a backward province of the Russian Empire (Kozmin V.M. View of Bazaar Square of Tsarevokokshaisk in 1957). At the same time, the historical and revolutionary theme in relation to the period of Mari history up to 1917 was also addressed (Zarubin A.P. Kokshamary Uprising in 1963). Despite the ideological bias of the paintings devoted to this theme, the painters very precisely and thoroughly recreate the ethnic and cultural characteristics of local groups of the Mari people.

An important place in the artists' works was occupied by the plots related to the beginning of the socialist epoch. During the time of 'thaw', 'stagnation' and 'perestroika' the ideologeme of returning to the Leninist standards and on this basis the idealisation of the early years of the Soviet regime, when the country was led by V.I. Lenin remained to be highly relevant. Only in the paintings of the beginning of the 1950s next to Lenin habitually the image of I.V. Stalin is present (Kozmin V.M. Signing the Decree on the Autonomy Foundation in 1951). "Leniniana" in the works of the Mari artists often intertwined with ethno-regional component (Butov A.I. The Decree for the Mari in 1967. Osokin G.M. Addressing Lenin for Advice in 1969. Podmaryov S.F. Lenin with Children in 1977, etc.). The spouse of the Soviet leader N.K. Krupskaya was portrayed in the similitude of the Mari people's friend (Kozmin V.M. N.K. Krupskaya with the Mari Pioneers in Moscow in 1923, 1960). Romanticism of the first years of the Soviet authority in the Mari rural areas was depicted in the works of many artists of the Mari ASSR (Kozmin V.M. Seeing Volunteers-Communists off to the Front in 1957; Lavrentiev Z.F. The Decree on Land in the Mari Village in 1959; Podmarev S.F. The Soviet's Power in 1967; Bakulevskiy A.S. Poor Peasants' Committee in the Mari Village in 1972, etc.). The issue of the establishment of Mari Autonomous Region was masterfully exploited by V.D. Kurochkin (Proclamation of Mari Autonomous Region in 1982; Revolutionary Committee of Mari Autonomous Region in 1987; Mari Autonomous Region's Festival in 1989). The collectivisation having caused in reality questionable consequences for the Mari rural areas is positively shown in the paintings of the Mari ASSR artists (Mikhailin I.A. The First Tractor in 1957; Yefimov I.V. To the Collective Farm in 1969; Mikhailin I.A. Great Start in 1985).

The Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945 was conceived by the artists of 1950-80s from the view of a general person, more often it was in a dramatic context and the event-driven component gave way to typification (Lavrentiev Z.F. A Mitten for the Soldiers in 1975;

Yefimov I.V. Parting to the Front in 1979; Nefedov M.K. May in 1985; Tarelkin B.I. The Widow's Field in 1986, etc).

The community level in the social space of the ethnic group is closely linked to the geographical space of the ethnic culture. Genre art is represented through the landscape genre. Exhibiting the life of rural communities, represented in the Soviet era by the collective farm or state farmers (Mamaev I.I. the anticipated morning; Skritsky E.S. the afternoon in 1973, etc.) occupied the significant place in the works of Mari Land artists. Many of the works in their implementation date back to the ethnographic realism of the early Soviet period of 1920-30s but more often according to the socialist realism standards, modernisation of the economy, introduction of technology is emphasised in the life of the society (Bogomolov N.V. The Landscape of Azanovo in 1960), the success in the socialism building in the countryside. At the same time, the industrial landscapes glorified the beauty of Mari Land (Mitrofanov D.A. The Forest Mechanized Site in 1955; Kozmin V.M. Mari Paper Plant in 1956; Vivatenko L.A. Construction of the Road in 1960; Skritsky E.S. The Rough Site in 1983 and others). When depicting the image of the rural life they reproduced the elements of the traditional Mari clothing, household items, holidays and ceremonies (Kulagin P.S. The Tractor Drivers in 1950; Mamaev I.I. The Anticipated Morning; Lavrentiev Z.F. Bread and Salt in 1980; Efimov I.V. My Fellow Countrymen in 1981, etc.). In this way, the ideological task to show the people's well-being, successful integration into the Soviet society, the Soviet people was implemented.

It is during this period of time that fine art captures the appearance of the urban culture of the ethnic group with the relevant cultural institutions and ethno-social communities, above all, professional creative workers (Mitrofanov D.A. The Joint Portrait of the Mari Composers in 1965-1966.) and the national intelligentsia (Lavrentiev Z.F. At the Teachers' Congress in 1987, etc.).

At the same time, a significant share of works of art of this period demonstrates a sincere interest in the traditional culture of the people. The painters create still lifes, where lovingly and carefully man-made household items leaving the world are drawn. Those items symbolic function and 'material code' of the ethnic culture wake up in this admiration (Podmaryov S.F. The Mari Still Life, 1969).

The artists are turning to the topic of folk music and musical instruments. In the realistic narrative in nature the works of Mari gusli kysle, drum shuvyr, accordion are shown as an imperative attribute of the festivals (Lavrentiev Z.F. Festival in the Mari Village), concerts (Mikhailin I.A. The Mari Tunes in 1957). Their sign and

symbol function is revealed in the reliefs (Kozmin A.V. Relief "Musicians" in 1976. Fine Arts Museum of the Republic of Mari El). The sacral function of the instruments is seen in the works of B.S. Pushkov accomplished in the 'severe' (Flower Holiday (the central part) 1975-80; The Mari Wedding in 1970).

A family occupies an important place in the ethnic culture of the social space. It appears to be as a space of generations in Mari art of this period. It is a rural family, bound by the traditional relationships and roles, the labour and military achievements of the older generation are emphasized in the paintings. A family is meant to be a national 'cell' of the Soviet society to be in direct connection with the social and historical context. The national is marked through the items of clothing and the Soviet is marked through the demonstration of awards (Lavrentiev Z.F. Bread and Salt in 1980 and others).

The subject space of Mari culture in fine arts of Mari land of 1950-1980 The subject space of Mari culture is generally represented by the portrait painting. In 1960-80s the painters of Mari Land depicted their contemporaries, mainly the representatives of the creative community of composers, writers and actors. It was that particular social group, symbolising a new quality stage of Mari culture development.

The Artists' Union invited writers, poets, composers to participate in their board meetings and conventions. Thus, during a constituent assembly of the Mari branch of Artists' Union in 1961 the national writer Sergey Nikolaev addressed a meeting. In his speech, he mentioned that the Republic gained a creative union similar to writers, 'artists of word'. It is the artists' job to "praise our beautiful native land with its amazing nature" (State Archive F. P-989. Series 1 Folder 2. P. 1, P.). A distinguished artist of the Russian Federation Yury Belkov painted the portrait of writer S. Nikolaev in 1908-1993) the same year.

Several years later, during another board meeting of the Artists' Union of the Mari Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic in 1970, poet S. Vishnevsky commented that "Mari writers are on friendly relations with the local painters. I will be quite right, if I say that painters often depict Mari writers in their paintings" (State Archive F. P-989. Series 1 Folder. 75, P. 50, P. 82). By portraying the native culture creators, painters attempted to capture the personality in continuous creative pursuit, thus, revealing the profession.

Painters Aleksey Zarubin (1913-1998) and Aleksey Butov (1935-1993) painted the portraits of the founders of professional Mari music, Ivan Klyuchnikov-Palantay (1886-1926) and Yakov Eshpay (1890-1963). They fulfilled

a high mission of depicting people highly acknowledged by the public for the music they created. Usually painters portray their contemporaries, after conversing with them and getting to know them in person. However, there are exceptions. For example, A. Zarubin sketched the portrait of I. Klyuchnikov-Palantay in 1961, 35 years after his death in 1926. In the retrospective portrait based on remaining pictures, I. Klyuchnikov-Palantay in the foreground of the painting occupies the central plan with calm and confident face expression. Behind his back in the background of the picture, there is the left bank of the Volga River. The nature does not merge with the person. Fine arts expert, Boris Tovarov-Koshkin emphasised that in the picture the viewers see an outstanding gifted national composer and musician as well as "a great national people's painter, sensitive, responsive and curious, comparable with the folk song". "Combination of a portrait and a landscape has significantly extended the opportunities of a painter in terms of image expressing and emotional character rendering. Pursuant to its composition, character generalisation and colorific details the portrait is deemed as the piece of monumental art.

The works of A. Butov are also appealing to the viewers. These include the portraits of composers Yakov Eshpay and his son Andrey Eshpay (1925-2015) shown by the piano in the creative endeavor "... remarkably emotional in character". (B. Tovarov-Koshkin, 1964). Composer A. Iskanderov, painted by A. Butov is portrayed with a soft turn of his head which creates the image of a thoughtful person with deliberate gestures. All these taken together convey the deep creative personality of the character.

The portraits of the founder of Mari literature Sergey Chavain (1888-1937) are the work of two painters: "Chavain by River Ilet" by A. Butov and "The Portrait of Chavain" by I. Ishpaev (1924-1974). A. Butov painted him in the rural environment on the bank of River Ilet.

A. Zarubin created the gallery of portraits of Mari writers, playwrights and poets. These include the portrait of Arsiy Volkov (Arseny Afanasievich) (1923-1994) standing in front of the bookcase. He also portrayed poet Semen Vishnevsky (1920-1990) as a very emotional person who sat down for a moment to contemplate on some lines of his new poem. The portrait of a talented Mari playwright Nikolay Arban (Derevyashkin) (1912-1995) also draws the eye. In addition to writing plays, he was also an amateur composer, painter and a national writer of the Republic of Mari El.

The portraits of actresses capture the viewers' attention. Painter A. Zarubin created the portrait of the Honoured Artist of the Mari Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic Anastasia Tikhonova (1909-1987). In the portrait,

she is looking into the distance as if contemplating on her new role. In 1959 Yu. Belkov painted the portrait of the Honoured Artist of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, People's Artist of the Mari Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic Anastasia Strausova (1905-1982). She is portrayed in the costume of a matchmaker in which she performed in "Salika" play (S. Nikolaev) and, thus, enchanted the painter with her exceptional talent. The portrait, as argued by G. Prokushev, "laid the foundation for creative maturity of the painter". The research was also appreciated by the representatives of the Mari intelligent community. During his speech at a board meeting of the Artists' Union of the Mari Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic in 1970, Mari poet S. Vishnevsky articulated that he liked the "portrait of People's Artist Strausova" (State Archive F. P-989. Series 1 Folder. 75, P. 50, P. 82).

In the picture painted by A. Butov "Na prazdnike pesni Toidemara" (at a holiday of Toydemar song) the viewers see a song holiday that takes place in the birch grove. The painter focused on the two national musical instruments: gusli and bagpipe. The fascinating Mari music played by the musician and Honoured Artist of the Mari Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, Pavel Toidemar (Stekolshchikov) (1899-1958) creates the holiday atmosphere; young men and girls are performing the Mari dance.

Along with the characters of art, there appeared the characters of Mari scientists which emphasised the institutional variety of Mari culture during that period of Mari history. These include works of Atlashkina E.D. Portrait of Mosolov V.P. in 1951 of Tarelkin B.I. Kim Vasin (Sketch to the portrait) in 1985 of Yamberdov I.M. Portrait of K. Sanukov in 1986.

Another important social type that had to be captured by the Soviet art is the working person. In the framework of Mari culture it was the character of a collective farmer. The ethnic identity was conveyed by both facial features and national costume which was significantly modified in the Soviet period, however, still functional in everyday life. The characteristic attributes of the working people include work equipment and state rewards as in The Portrait of a Collective Farmer of "Socialism" Collective Farm by Osipov B.I. A Russian painter Yu. Belkov who came to Mari land in 1950s, created a lot of portraits of dairy-women. The portraits reveal a genuine interest of the painter to the characters in the pictures. For example, The Portrait of the Leading Dairy-woman of "Rossia" Collective Farm of Grigorieva O.A. in 1956 or Portrait of a Sheep-master Masha Andreeva in 1976, etc. In these portraits, the painter depicted the national costumes of the Highland and

Meadow Mari people. Sometimes he paints modest village girls, appealing to the painter for their ingenious character and expressive traits. This is illustrated by Portrait of Yagodkina Manya in 1963; The Portrait of a Girl in 1971, etc. According to L.A. Kuvshinskaya "the portrait of the Mari land would not be complete without artistic works of Aleksey Zarubin, Yury Belkov..., who created a variety of national character portraits (On Mari Land, 1981).

Electronic catalogue project "ethnic and cultural space of the Mari people in fine arts of Mari land in 1950-1980s":

The project is aimed at making the research results available to the public and creating conditions under which the studied works are going to be widely introduced into learning and teaching process. Only a limited number of paintings can be exhibited in the museums due to the restricted display area. Another challenge is the long process of painting preparation for publication. Nowadays, one of the most effective forms of painting presentation is the theme-based electronic catalogue which can be uploaded to the museum websites or issued as a CD.

The work on compiling the electronic catalogue has been going on for the past two years. A team of experts in different fields were involved in the work. They include staff of the museum, professional subjects teachers and programmers. Developing the electronic catalogue is aimed at creating the integrated digital data pool. The project aims to make e-versions of little known works of visual art from 1950-1980s kept in Mari El museum collections available to the general public and, thus, preserve the local museum fund.

The developed electronic catalogue is to meet the following criteria: provide a full coverage of Mari people cultural space, their way of life and aspirations, demonstrate the variety of types and genres of painters' works referring to the selected chronological period, provide a complete exhibition of the museum fund of the Republic of Mari El (Kolcheva, 2015).

The requirement description of the project involved selection of painters whose works were the most characteristic for the period, compiling and description of the painters' profiles, digitising of works, writing comments to the works. The work on the project was carried out in T. Evseev National Museum of the Republic of Mari El and the Republican Museum of Fine Arts (the Russian Humanitarian Science Foundation in 2015).

The decision on the final selection of paintings was made by the head of the project and the museum curators at places. About 300 paintings were selected. Digitising of the paintings was carefully carried out from different perspectives in order to extend the visual material.

The painters whose works were selected for digitizing and uploading to the website include S.F. Podmaryov, Z.F. Lavrentiev, A.S. Bakulevsky, G.V. Taygildin, I.V. Yefimov, I.M. Yamberdov, Yu.S. Belkov, B.S. Pushkov, P.T. Gorbunsov, A.I. Butov, I.M. Plandin, V.A. Bogolyubov, etc. The profiles of painters were prepared and the pictures for representation in the catalogue were selected. Photographic processing was applied to all the images of the selected paintings in order to allocate them in the catalogue. After preparing the outline of pages, the experts developed the design and navigation requirements (colour palette, corporate colours, fonts, windows, texts, images, design concepts and work principles of navigation tools, etc.).

Data preparation was the most important and labour consuming process that involved participation of numerous stakeholders. It included preparing the source text to be displayed on the screen; an image range (reproductions, digital files); comments; general editing of the submitted material.

All the source data were passed on to the programmers' team who created a few designs of the title page and headings on subordinate levels in various colour layout in compliance with the requirement description of the project. After considering all the options it was decided to choose the style of reserved minimalism. The resource is designed in light pastel shades. This colour layout enhances perception of the provided information and allows concentrating on the text and visual images without distracting to the design details. After design approval, the digital data started to be uploaded into the catalogue. The logical structure of the electronic catalogue and giving instructions to the authors to prepare tests for every sub-section turned to be a very important stage of the project. In the catalogue structure, there are two large sections: "personalities" and "works" (the number of sections can be varied depending on the logics of the material presentation). The texts are presented in Russian with some names of works in the Mari language.

Thus in order to perform the work on the project in the due time and manner there was created an effective working group, each group member contributed his/her share to the joined project.

CONCLUSION

Research into representation of Mari culture social space in professional fine art of the Mari land of the Soviet period (1950-1980s) sheds light on the following.

The role of historic painting as an ideological tool of social realism distorted the past of the Mari people

in fine art; let some 'inconvenient' facts slide; criticised pre-revolutionary way of life of Mari people; focused on class struggle of Russian and Mari peasants in the 17-18th centuries, glorified the romance of the first years of Soviet power.

In the forefront of national Neoromanticism in folkloric and mythological genre there were created the images of Mari male and female heroes. Leniniana is depicted in the framework of this genre, merging with ethnic and regional component. Unlike this transient theme the images of Mari heroes have been well demanded in culture until now, thus, justifying their archetypic contents developed during that period.

In compliance with the standards of socialist realism the painters emphasised the modernisation of the Mari village, achievements of socialist construction, appearance of the ethnic urban culture with correspondent cultural institutions. Idealisation was inherent in Socialist realism art. Simultaneously, there is an interest to the traditional Mari culture, the national costume, folk music, national instruments. This vector of artistic introspection is based on the lyrics of the national neoromanticism which involves, first of all, the Russian painters. The Mari painters join the streamline to the full extent only in 1980s.

Representation of the family in fine art exists as the synthesis of two tendencies: it is depicted as the ethnic unit of the Soviet society embracing three generations, which implies continuity and stability of this social institution.

In terms of Mari culture, the paintings display, first of all, the creative community as a symbol of the new development stage of Mari culture. Another important social type portrayed in Mari art is an agricultural person, a collective farmer, a dairy woman. The candid images revealed psychological characters, typical situations, anthropological peculiarities of the Mari people. These portraits cannot be underestimated for the history of the Mari people and culture. They create a multi-faceted psychological profile of the Mari people characteristic for that period.

Thus, the research of ethno-regional phenomenon of fine art as the form of ethnic and cultural reflection outlines its efficiency emphasising the unique character of the phenomenon. This allows articulating the applied aspects of our research and bring up the issue of Mari fine art as the cultural heritage of the area and the country which should be made publicly available. We proposed the efficient and cost-effective method of creating an electronic catalogue which is in demand in cultural and educational activity. The research is to be continued.

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