

HISTORY OF ART HISTORY IN CENTRAL,  
EASTERN AND SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE

vol. 2

Society of Modern Art in Toruń

&

Department of History of Modern Art, Faculty of Fine Art,  
Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń

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# **HISTORY OF ART HISTORY IN CENTRAL, EASTERN AND SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE**

vol. 2

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The formation of art history centers



# HISTORY OF ART HISTORY IN CENTRAL, EASTERN AND SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE

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## The history of art's history: The realization of the Russian art history project of I. Grabar during the Silver Age and the post-war period

Let us begin our report with the thesis of an accomplished Russian academic and the organizer of the two most widely-known projects in the history of Russian art – first, occurring during the Silver age and the other, the realization of which began during Stalin and carried into the years of the Thaw – I. E. Grabar. This thesis was stated in a letter written by him in 1907 to N. Vranghel. “The text must describe the history of the sculpture just like it would the characteristics of the age”, he wrote. Actually, the whole history of art will be simultaneously the history of culture<sup>1</sup>. In the letter written in 1907, A. Benois, who was supposed to be one of the members of the author's society for creating fundamental historical work, again expresses his idea. “In essence, this history of art exists; it's almost “a history of Russian culture”. I would like to publish 12 volumes or, if you wish, half-volumes so that there will be 6 volumes”<sup>2</sup>. Then, Grabar continues to express his idea. “...The history of art, which is widely understood, almost transforms into the history of culture. The culture is favorable and has its laws. Even if we do not know them, we still feel some of their marks. The best way – if not to fully understand, then it is at least to feel history's direc-

tion – analogies and parallels. Every culture has its complex share of neighboring influences, their own remnants of the past and so on”<sup>3</sup>.

Today in Russia, this thesis is more relevant than ever before. The situation in human sciences during the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is such, that cultural science is developing at a rapid pace, forcing us to view traditional perceptions (to a certain extent within the bounds of politically motivated and ideology-driven ideas) in a different manner, especially in regards to the past idea of I. Grabar. Unfortunately, the idea that is still relevant a century later has not yet been realized for several reasons. First, the history of art that began to arise since 1910<sup>4</sup> was not realized due to the absence of cultural studies as a science. The realization of the two following historical projects of Russian art collided with radical changes in politics and ideology. Beginning in the years of the Thaw, the totalitarian regime's collapse changed the initial aim of the second variation of such history, which began during Stalin's rule. The first volume of this publication appeared in 1953<sup>5</sup>. As far as the third historical project of Russian art, whose brainchild was A. I. Komech, and which is currently carried out by the State Art Studies

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<sup>1</sup> Grabar (1974: 195).

<sup>2</sup> Grabar (1974: 192).

<sup>3</sup> Grabar (1974: 192).

<sup>4</sup> Istoriya (1910).

<sup>5</sup> Istoriya (1953).

Institute<sup>6</sup>, that even with all of its achievements (proven by the out of print first volume to be undeniable) has the markings of the radical changes that began to take place in the 80s, dealing with the disintegration of imperial ideas and the realization of the relevance of civilization identity. This is obviously an unstable and an uncertain process that does not contribute to real life and the methodological definition of the given work. Civilization identity assumes that its foundations lie with the culture instead of ideology as it was in the past. In the new conditions, which arose during the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the thesis of I. Grabar regarding the history of art being the history of culture has proven to be very relevant and even methodologically justified. Nevertheless, in order for the thesis to become a methodological basis for new fundamental historical works, time is needed. One has to question if even in the third variation of the history of Russian art, the idea of I. Grabar can be fully embodied. Still, it is a constructive concept and can serve as a starting point for a paradigm in historical research, which would allow for the tracing of certain aspects as well as clarifying that, which we call the history of art's history.

Let us note that in the Russian art studies, the direction of research, which is defined in this conference as "the history of art's history", is not a new concept, neither does it apply to more developed ones. One must ask if the fundamental works in regards to this topic are rather rare. In similar types of works that appeared in Russia, only several volumes on the history of art studies, which came out in the 60s, can be called great art history works from the State Art Studies Institute (once called the Institute of Art History)<sup>7</sup>.

Besides the aforementioned sociological reasons for the inability to realize the thesis of I. Grabar, there are other reasons that deal with the history of methodological research in the field of art studies. An analysis of these reasons allows us, if not to reproduce, then at least to touch upon several substantial aspects of the problem, which is specified by the initiators of our volume as "the history of art history".

There is no need to stop on the conditions of Soviet Art Studies during a totalitarian regime. It is widely known that after a certain flash of Art

Studies, which took place in the 20s, there begins an era of ideology-driven and politically motivated art studies. Still, one cannot state that the research of this period does not bring any interesting discoveries. Nevertheless, many ideas that are relevant to European art studies did not have any place here. In each historical study, at the forefront there are always works with over-the-top class-specific, economic and political criteria.

Another thing is the art studies of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Starting from the years of the Thaw in Russia, almost all of the problems relevant to European art studies are being addressed. The methodology of art studies frequently finds its way into the academic spotlight. It cannot be said that during this period there were no fundamental historical works in Russia. For example, significant strides were taken during research of ancient Russian art. There were interesting ideas in philological science. However, during the mid 90s, one of the most respected modern art experts D. Sarabyanov described the situation in Russian art studies as being stagnant and critical<sup>8</sup>.

Let us name some of the reasons for the given situation.

The first reason lies at the surface. A. Sinyavsky in his time, justly called socialistic realism the new classicism<sup>9</sup>. As it is known, classicism is dominated by the position of government. In soviet culture, there was a split of art into official and nonofficial categories. There was so much displaced and suppressed art during the Soviet empire, that today the artistic process has to be almost completely restored. This applies to not only art of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but also to art throughout all of history. Throughout the whole second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the revival of many streams and artistic occurrences (such as avant-garde) began to unravel as well as the corresponding reflection of art studies (for example, the "formalists theory", anticipating structuralism research, concepts of V. Propp, ideas of M. Bakhtin et. al.)

In the end of the 70s, when the great art historian V. Prokofyev addressed the methodology of art studies, he highlighted four phases of a historian's direction towards a more improved variation of art history – evidential, reconstructive, i.e., providing for the discovery of a certain consistency that is

<sup>6</sup> Istoriya (2007).

<sup>7</sup> Istoriya (1963).

<sup>8</sup> Sarabyanov (1995:1–2, 10).

<sup>9</sup> Sinyavsky (2003:165).

analytical and synthesizing, supporting the uncovering of a general style of the age<sup>10</sup>. If one takes into account the history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century art, then it seems that Russian art studies have been stuck in phase one for a long time. Art historians are still gathering the data and then all the discussion in regards to the need to build a new art history variant lead to a single conclusion that the right time has not yet come. However, the third project of this history is currently underway. Of course, the process of uncovering the general style of the last century is still ahead. Although, in connection with the 20<sup>th</sup> century, e.g. style, as was justly addressed by H. Sedlmayr, will not be possible to uncover due to the emergence of many artistic paths and directions, each of which seeks universality but, in the end, is not able to confirm it.

The second reason for the absence of success in researching historical artistic processes, no matter how paradoxical it may seem, deals with postmodernism, to which, in recent years, art historians have given significant attention to. From one side, postmodernism stimulates new interpretation of art history as a history, in which the accent is placed on facts, forestalling postmodern. And certainly, there are such facts in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>11</sup> and in the 60s of the past century<sup>12</sup>. On the other hand, postmodern, after all, blocks the historical imagination of the researcher. It seems that aesthetics undermine the belief in the existence of universal conceptions, relegating history as a science to a poetic text. Postmodern complicates the essential concept and specificity of historical narrative as a form of an adequate reproduction of the past. By undermining the division between fact and fiction, between history and art, postmodern questions actual historical knowledge and the reality of objective truth. All of this allows us to conclude that the problem of overcoming the crisis in historical science cannot be resolved by postmodern. Was not art history research transformed into essays under the influence of postmodern and not broken down to individual, local topics and problems?

The third reason for impeding the creation of fundamental art history works is the interest towards theorizing, which arose during the years of the Thaw. The theory prevailed over history and

distracted from it. Of course, in the long run, this has to turn into a constructive side in itself. It is during this period when the process of revival in art studies and philological science occurred during the 20s. Intense theorizing in art studies facilitated that, which in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century became an evident revival in the complex of fundamental sciences as well as in the humanitarian sphere. The popularity of cybernetics, linguistics, semiotics, anthropology, etc. became the basis for the revival of positivism. However, let us say that interest towards hermeneutics, psychology, philosophy, history of national mentalities gives evidence of the human sphere's activation. Art historians assimilated the experience of methodological activation in various scientific spheres. For example, D. Sarabyanov correlates the end of the crisis in art history to the implementation of historical psychology ideas or the history of national mentalities. Such prospects force the art historian to determine the emergence of a national mentality in its history, and if Russian art is taken into consideration, then the element of this mentality is the Eastern-Christian element in artistic systems, which does fully coincide with the evolving processes of the West<sup>13</sup>. Thus, D. Sarabyanov asks a really important question dealing with the influence of the East on the development of western civilization and the establishment of western art, on which J. Strzygowski touched upon before in his work *The East or Rome?* The research of J. Strzygowski appeared during a time when the dominant view was that Byzantine art is a degradation of Roman art, which in itself was an imitation of Greek art. J. Strzygowski confidently asserted that Byzantine art is an independent system. "The achievement of an Austrian scientist – writes G. Bazin – is that he absolutely expressed an original character of Byzantine art, which was brought out by a certain eastern outlook and is attributed to the highest achievements of man"<sup>14</sup>. This view of J. Strzygowski will be relevant during the age of increased interest toward ancient Russian art, which will be typical of the modernism and symbolism period and, in whole, of the Russian Silver Age, when I. Grabar is developing the first variant of the Russian art history project.

Finally, the fourth and final but at the same time deciding factor for the stagnation and crisis

<sup>10</sup> Prokofyev (1978: 249).

<sup>11</sup> Estetika (2005: 135).

<sup>12</sup> Lipovetsky (2008).

<sup>13</sup> Sarabyanov (1995: 33).

<sup>14</sup> Bazin (1994: 129).

of Russian art studies is the changes in the support of collective identity in Russian civilization or the shift from ideology to culture. The lack of a developed cultural science cannot be attributed to the emergence of a new methodology in creation historical art works. The creation of history in its current form, based on the thesis of I. Grabar, takes into account the developmental level of cultural science on the one hand, and the positioning of cultural history as a scientific field on the other. The research of cultural history, if one does not take into account the early-season and superficial study guides, is rather rare, with the exception possibly being the attempt of M. S. Kagan<sup>15</sup>.

The overcoming of stagnation in art studies has to do with the gradual ripening of this same exact methodology, which today is more relevant than ever before. To a certain extent, the emergence of a new methodology – the result of the imperial system's collapse and the emergence of a new basis for collective identity, specifically, culture. However, this is, after all, is not a determining factor. The determining factor is what in his time N. Berdyaev called the transition towards a principally different cultural type or something that changes the culture, which has been observed in history since the times of the Renaissance<sup>16</sup>. Later, arriving at a more materialistic argument, P. Sorokin will call this unraveling in the 20<sup>th</sup> century a transitional process from one type of culture to another alternative type<sup>17</sup>. But this process is a universal one and covers all cultures. On one of the levels of historical research of Russian art, there appears a specific emergence of pan-European processes. The fall of the Bolshevik empire has only made it easier for the unraveling of this process. Up until the collapse of the soviet empire, the institute that overcame chaos was the empire, i.e., self-sufficient government, determined to rule over everything, including the arts. But, instead of the institute that facilitated the survival of society (according to B. Malinowski this is the essential function of a culture), the government transformed, in accordance with the term of A. Toynbee, into a historical invocation, i.e., became a hindrance to its survival.

Let us focus our attention on the conditions, which in Russia, largely contributed to the realiza-

tion of the idea of culture. This is a specific situation that emerged in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, perhaps only in Russia. Of course, throughout history of philosophical and scientific study, the idea of culture emerged much earlier and some researchers date this back to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>18</sup>. Some groups begin to realize it earlier, as in the case of Germany, while others realize it much later. One cannot say that Russia is lagging significantly in developing the idea of culture. There is basis to assume that it started developing it at the same time as Germany, i.e., during the age of neo-romanticism or symbolism when, coincidentally, I. Grabar begins the first history of Russian art project. Also, the flash of neo-romanticism in Russia is very significant for Silver age culture, right before being eclipsed by educational policy that undercut the national beginnings of Russian culture. Thus, such a situation arose, that due to political reasons and experimentation with socialism, the idea of culture once again emerges in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which revives cultural studies that have been developing to this day. These circumstances have molded a unique situation in the human sciences in Russia.

We have already acknowledged the demand, which arose in the 60s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, for theorizing, and the increased interest towards methodological issues in art studies. Let us try to find in these processes the complex as well as the fruitful directional path of art studies towards the discovery of the idea of culture and its constructive role during research of historical problems dealing with art. Such theorizing in art studies relates, on the one hand, to the activation of traditional and, on the other hand, to new and scientific disciplines. That, which interests Russian cultural experts today, for a long time has been of interest to philologists, ethnologists, philosophers, folklorists, historians and sociologists.

Let us begin with aesthetics as a philosophical discipline, which in the years of the Thaw experienced a true Renaissance<sup>19</sup>. The aesthetics of this time went back to the previously stated idea by W. Morris in regards to the necessity to review the idea of art and, in particular, to understanding the drama of separation between art and people, the masses, and society, which already occurred during

<sup>15</sup> Kagan (2003).

<sup>16</sup> Berdyaev (1923).

<sup>17</sup> Sorokin (2000).

<sup>18</sup> Mezhuev (2006).

<sup>19</sup> Khrenov (2009).

the Renaissance era. As it is widely known, W. Morris, continuing in the tradition of romanticists, idealized the middle ages, when aesthetic beginnings served as a flip-side to utilitarian purposes, which is illustrated, for example, by applied art. The tendency to apply aesthetics to everyday life, surroundings and work, which, for example, appeared in the 60s in design, has already carved its place in symbolism and modernist style as an artistic direction, meaning it was yet another step towards the discovery of culture. It is evident that, in a transitional period, the divisions between artistic and inartistic spheres were not as apparent. This is why the problematics of art had a tendency to spill over to the problematics of culture in whole. It is impossible to realize artistic and aesthetic processes without giving account to unraveling transformations of culture.

The next step towards realization of culture was also taken during the sociology Renaissance years of the 60s. In the given case, the humanitarian sphere gave in to positivism, which separated art research from philosophy, and, consequently, aesthetics, contributing to the penetration of cybernetics, statistics, mathematics, etc. into art. Also, obviously one cannot view this process of approaches assimilation, commonly referred to as scientific disciplines, in a negative tone. For cultural studies to finally be viewed as a scientific discipline, its involvement with disciplines of the fundamental complex was seen as beneficial. But the influence of these disciplines on humanitarian fields, after all, must have their boundaries. As it was stated by H. G. Gadamer, the realization of humanitarian sciences in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and their becoming is "completely under the toils of the fundamental sciences' example"<sup>20</sup>. But this situation cannot remain unchanged. Human sciences must assert their self-sufficiency.

In fact, even in the past, sociology had its influence on art studies. And H. Wölfflin is credited with the principle called "art history without names". Here, such a view of history corresponds to the idea of A. Comte, who formed the representation of history as stories without names of famous people and even without the names of nations. This is obviously not a neo-romanticist tradition.

As is shown by the development of humanitarian sciences in Russia in the 60s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, aesthetics gradually spills over into sociology. The

reason for this lies in the discovery of a whole galaxy during the 60s, which until this time remained unknown to the art historian, and more specifically, the discovery of the masses or society that started to become active, was virtually unknown to the government and this was illustrated by the public's reaction to art. As it turns out, the perception of ideologists in regards to the reception of art by the people does not correlate with reality. The center of attention in sociology is shifted towards reception, perception and the aesthetical horizons of the public. Sociology of the 60s reacted to the popularization of art in such ways when they appeared in their official expressions and when they dealt with the escalation of mass culture such as was the case with the years of the Thaw. But neither the ideologization of art nor the attitudes of the recipients in regards to mass culture yet exhaust all of the riddles dealing with the reception of art by the mass public<sup>21</sup>. Going deeper into the history of mass culture, including its domestic variation, art experts discovered, to a certain extent, unexamined ancient elements of mass aesthetic attitudes in connection, on the one hand, to traditional (Christian) and, from the other, to city folklore. In this sense, the most illustrative works were proven to be those of V. Prokofiev<sup>22</sup> and N. Zorkaya<sup>23</sup>. In essence, the aforementioned researchers continued to develop several ideas that were already previously introduced by representatives of the Russian "formal" school in the 20s. Thus, under the influence of sociology, whole unrepresented cultural layers were discovered and comprehended, including art, which was not investigated in art studies.

Yet another step towards culture deals with the popularity of semiotics and structuralism. Let us focus our attention in this sense at least on the connection with this general tendency. The idea of "death" of the author by R. Barthes is in accordance with the history without names idea. Imagining the perceived representation by the interpreter, U. Eco, in essence, transformed him into a co-author as well as a second author of his work. But perhaps the idea of the "death" of the author does not begin with R. Barthes, but with C. Lévi-Strauss, whose work determined many ideas that are widely known in philology, art semiotics, folklore studies, ethnology,

<sup>20</sup> Gadamer (1988: 39).

<sup>21</sup> Khrenov (2007).

<sup>22</sup> Prokofyev (1983).

<sup>23</sup> Zorkaya (1976).

etc. The reason for this is the growing interest in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to myth, which, as was stated by C. Lévi-Strauss, does not call for an author. “Myths do not have authors”, he wrote, “with their first perception of being myths, regardless of their source; they are already embodied in tradition”. “When they hear a myth the listeners receive a message that comes from, relatively speaking, nowhere”<sup>24</sup>. Here it is worth mentioning the works of E. Meletinsky and U. Lotman that were dedicated to myths.

Influenced by structuralism as a positivistic occurrence, the interest towards myth, curiously enough, meant the overcoming of rationalism and scientific character that was understood by the educational psyche. This was some sort of revival sign that modernism lacked. At some point, myth vindicated F. Nietzsche, but, within the bounds of modernism. A new attempt to rehabilitate myth coincided with the movement towards postmodernism. It cannot be said that structuralism gave the impulse to the art historian, since the idea of diachrony is foreign in principle to the person dealing with structuralism. Perhaps the revival of myth in humanitarian sciences and in art – is a circumstantial evidence of a movement towards discovery and culture in itself, and the birth of a new type of culture.

Here arises a new and very fundamental question dealing with the decline of previous age’s culture in the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the emergence and the establishment of an alternative culture. This universal breakdown or transition has previously been documented in the 20<sup>th</sup> century by N. Berdyaev, which, as we see it, influenced the ideas of H. Sedlmayr, and were methodologically developed later by P. Sorokin. According to P. Sorokin, the establishment of an alternative culture deals with the return to the supersensible; this can be demonstrated by the art of the Middle Ages and by what romanticists cultivated in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The birth of aesthetics as a science in the early modernistic period is associated with the discovery of a sensuous beginning within a culture, which actually undermines the significance of Plato’s ideas and thus, raises the significance of Aristotle’s artistic process conceptualization. The establishment of an alternative culture is associated with the actualization of mythological consciousness, including the forms of

art, which then again demonstrates the opening of myth structuralism.

Hence, the interest towards myth not only demonstrates a cultural movement towards the supersensible in whole, but also the revival of symbolic forms of art, since the supersensible element can only be sent, in principle, via symbols. So, it was discovered, that Hegel, who suspected the symbolic phase in history to be a history of the becoming spirit, did not mean it at all as an indicator of archaic forms of thinking, to which, however, the art’s interest increased in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Art of the 20<sup>th</sup> century demonstrated a return to myth and to the symbol. But, at the same time, it demonstrated the reality of the historic process’ cyclic unraveling. This was, first of all, however, a process of the general culture, the impression of which must be reflected in the art of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Finally, one cannot leave out the already mentioned thesis of D. Sarabyanov in regards to the overcoming of the art studies crisis – the recent interest of domestic art studies to historic psychology. Nevertheless, this direction emerged in the historiography itself and, from the beginning, was presented as a reaction to the imperfection of traditional historian methods. In regards to the crisis in science, we still associated this exclusively with the crisis in art studies and, in particular, with art history. Yet, the art historian is inspired by the methodology of historic science. Meanwhile, this is the last thing that enters a crisis. Historians note that the question in regards to the history’s subject in the scientific knowledge system and, in particular, its association to social sciences towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, still remains unclear<sup>25</sup>. As it was pointed out by the great Middle age culture expert, A. Gurevich, when setting the stage for the “historian in search of method” discussion, “one must discuss the crisis of historic knowledge”<sup>26</sup>. And, perhaps, this is the most significant reason for the crisis in art history.

But since the crisis is viewed in historical science in such manner, then the result of this is the crisis in disciplines that are dependent on the general historiography. In fact, one must not associate this crisis exclusively with the domestic historiography crisis, which, for a long time, was the result of Bolshevik ideology and Marxism. When talking about a cri-

<sup>24</sup> Lévi-Strauss (2000: 26).

<sup>25</sup> Savelyeva, Poletaev (1997:38).

<sup>26</sup> Gurevich (1996: 5).



sis, A Gurevich understands this as a global crisis of historic knowledge. "Under the conditions of growing and sometimes intensely dividing nationalism and chauvinism", writes A. Gurevich, "all kinds of pseudo-historic myths and forms of thinking tend to either emerge or come to life". Simultaneously, under conditions of growing intellectual irresponsibility, some scholars tend to come loose, which makes it more difficult to understand historic truths. "It is incredible to think that the accelerating historic developmental path, which has been accompanied by many cataclysms, is a threat to our historic memory as well as to the sense of continuity with the past"<sup>27</sup>. The overcoming of not only Bolshevik ideology but also educational rationalism leads the historian to fixate and process layers of history that are associated with not only the conscious, but also with the subconscious and even with the collective subconscious. Conscious historical layers are associated with ideology, while the subconscious – with the mentality.

Thus, history transforms into a history of mentality, or more specifically, mentalities. Each civilization has a certain mentality. Is not mentality an expression of philosophical, scientific and aesthetic systems? This is the level of collective psyche, on which the thought is not divided from emotion, myth, and collective perceptions. For the historian, it is necessary to fixate not only on what the people of a given era talked about, but also what they "gave away" without trying to give account and not being conscious of some historic processes. Up to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, mentality was ignored by historians. But research, done by representatives of the *Annales* School of History, of the west during the Middle Ages, shifted the focus towards a new parallel in history. It was found out that the mentality as a collective system is able to deform individual ideas and thoughts. In any case, any artistic fact of any given era cannot be grasped without the fixation of the given era's mentality.

We have showed how, in the activity of various scientific branches (aesthetics, sociology, semiotics, historic psychology, etc.), there appears, first of all, a logical emergence and establishment of the culture idea as a basis for the synthesis of various influences on the collective values system, which is able to bond a society and support the collective identity of the people. But in the given case, we are

forced to carry out a fundamental clarification. The movement of cultural ideas in circumstantial forms unfolded in such a manner that not only the cultural idea in whole was understood, but also the idea of that culture that came to replace the declining culture, which is exactly what modernism reflected. Nevertheless, the positivistic trajectory of culture did not pay any attention to this nuance. It turned out that the actual culture was a product of the existing culture's spirit. Researchers that followed the positivistic approach never discussed modernism as a significant characteristic of culture in the later stages of history. Thus, for example, the interest towards mythology, which was fixated by us in association with structuralism, implies not only a step towards the discovery of a culture in itself but also the conscious awareness of the culture in its new form as well as towards the situation, in which culture existed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The acknowledgement of a transitional situation<sup>28</sup> is associated with the decline of an educational tradition, and, subsequently, modernism, and with the emergence and establishment of an alternative culture, which is already developing based on educational ideas.

In this situation, the opposition to modernism will not be postmodernism. One would think – is not the growing interest towards mythology in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century only indicative of a movement towards the discovery of the culture's significance? Perhaps it does not only indicate this factor. However, without understanding the actualization of the myth idea, it is not possible to understand the decline of one type of culture and the establishment of a new one. It is important to point out that alternative global perception of modernism is not postmodernism, but the actual idea of culture itself, which, today, is understood more and more by art historian. It is with this idea, with which one must find the solution to the existing dead-end. Postmodernism is strong in critical and destructive pathos. But it seems that its time is already passing, and it does not resolve all of the accumulated contradictions in art studies at all.

Finally, after the characteristics of scientific context, which allows to reproduce the movement of circumstantial forms towards the discovery of a cultural idea, let us again return to I. Grabar, and, in particular, to his paradoxical judgment that was stated in his letter in 1953 to A. Savinov. In this

<sup>27</sup> Grabar (1983: 144).

<sup>28</sup> Khrenov (2008: 98).

letter, one cannot but note one conclusion of the distinguished art historian. “My concept of Russian art history”, he writes, “As you know, was reflected in the “History of Russian Art”, that was written in 1908 and in the Tretyakovskaya gallery exhibition in 1913. Beginning in 1908, I spent many days in the Tretyakovskaya gallery, studying it, and in the ten years between 1908 and 1917, the conception finally came into fruition and, as a result, was accepted by P. N. Nedarovsky for his Russian museum exposition as well as by all of the peripheral museums and the art studies society. I think that the main issue might be not in the review but only in several clarifications, which I had to carry out by myself in 1917...”<sup>29</sup>.

Thus, the political course radically changed along with the social psyche as well as the attitude towards history and historical heritage, while the idea of Russian art history of I. Grabar remained the same without any changes since the beginning of the century. This circumstance must be explained in some way. But without any analysis of what was happening in the culture of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this phenomenon is hard to explain. How can one explain culture, if cultural science did not even emerge yet, let alone become institutionalized? If the science did not yet emerge, then the idea of culture was at least already a reality. It entered the consciousness of society and served as a basis for opposition to the government. But it only appeared real in circumstantial forms, i.e., within the bounds of other scientific disciplines.

Nevertheless, the statement of I. Grabar turns out to be very precise. In it, we can see the key to the era, which turned away from futurism not only in the form of an artistic direction, but also in the sense of world perception, which A. Toynbee calls *passé-ism*, without which it is hard to follow the history of romanticist tradition’s permanent activation in the history of art. For I. Grabar, it is definitely not worth changing the design of history, since he emerges during the revival of romanticism in the beginning of the past century, i.e., the emergence of neo-romanticism and symbolism. The design of Russian art history for I. Grabar begins during the Silver age, i.e., at the very same time when romanticist tradition reaches the height of its development.

This was the age when the preserved religious icons of old believers from middle age made contact with collectors and art experts. There was increasing demand for ancient icons. More and more collectors started to emerge. This popular movement was first demonstrated at the Ancient Russian Art exhibition in 1913, and was associated with the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Romanov family. Finally, the broad community, for the first time, saw an icon from the middle ages.

As a continuation of this trend, many explorers emerged that were determined to find ancient icons. Describing the new age with the enthusiasm of ancient and national traditions, P. Muratov, who was actually invited in his time by I. Grabar to write several chapters for the first variant of Russian art history, writes: “These voyages do not resemble anything our artistic colleagues are doing in Italy!” Northern rivers, boundless forests buried under snow, sleepy isolated towns, monastery hotels, and bleak governorate cities. Hundreds of miles, many days of travelling, many days of waiting and being patient: this is why art is rarely scattered across the wide and open spaces of Russian land. And this includes worries and happy hours, such as the ones someone might experience when they see the outskirts of Novgorod, or the Ferapontov Monastery against the backdrop of lake landscape in contrast to their bleak, governorate cityscape”<sup>30</sup>.

When it comes to the second variant of history of the Russian art, then the work done towards its realization is unraveling (again under the supervision of I. Grabar) in the atmosphere of activating romanticist tradition, which, since the end of the 50s, became a reality. It is this exact period about which writes A. Yanov: “From under the backward rock of official ideology, all of a sudden arose fresh and amazing voices, talking about the need for a national revival – a revival of national roots and the saving of Russia. A new attitude, like a whirlwind surrounded Moscow. It appeared poetically, from the bottom, not only due to the directives of the administration because at times, it was directed against it. In the house of the intellectuals, in clubs and universities, people appeared of various ages – the elderly, youths – determined to return “home”, back to the sacred national spirit; they triumphantly spoke of “the land” and “the soil” – as if the Sla-

<sup>29</sup> Grabar (1983: 144).

<sup>30</sup> Muratov (2005: 36).

vophils from the 1830's were reborn"<sup>31</sup>. Of course, in the years of the Thaw as well as in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, new explorers appeared, seeking ancient relics and icons in the isolated depths of the nation. Everything was repeated.

When the situation in the 50s of all-around interest towards history has to be reexamined with the new variation of Russian art history, then the neo-romanticist education establishment, which was incorrectly understood by the Bolsheviks, turned out to be appropriate and solely acceptable. This is why the acknowledgement of I. Grabar and his unwillingness to include corrections into the first variation should not come as a surprise. In this conservative behavior of I. Grabar we can see cyclic logic. This is a very interesting fact, since "the years of the Thaw" are not only a time of modernistic revival, but of the whole problematic scheme associated with the Enlightenment utopia. The process turns out to be even more complex. This can really be ascertained, which is what is stated in the book written by the art historian A. Yakimovich<sup>32</sup>. But "the years of the Thaw" are also the source of crisis in regards to world perception. Furthermore, this is also a source of revival for romanticist tradition, which was strong during the age when I. Grabar had his idea, i.e., during the Silver Age. It is amazing that Russia, which began the 20<sup>th</sup> century with its hidden establishments, is harmonious to the Russia during the years of the Thaw. In both cases, the educational establishment came into conflict with romanticism. The latter activated and facilitated and revival of history, tradition and national spirit, which was reflected in expression.

The harmony of the ages – in the revival of national and confessional beginnings – is what D. Sarabyanov talks about when he advises art historian to closely examine the methodology of the Annales School of History. Of course, the revival of these characteristics also appears in ideology-driven form. Gradually, ideology declines, or more specifically, withers away. To the forefront, during this period, comes the alternative (in regards to state institutions), or namely, culture. Thus, the understanding of art history by I. Grabar as a history of culture is also very precise. Romanticist tradition allows overcoming the destructive educational establishment, and decisively connects the present

with the past. The rehabilitation of history opens up culture. Judging from the acknowledgement of I. Grabar, and in accordance with the fact that art history is written as a history of culture, in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century he was interested in what today is of everyone's interest, and this was not a leisure interest but an issue of a specific civilization's survival, a civilization known as Russia.

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<sup>31</sup> Yanov (1990: 156).

<sup>32</sup> Yakimovich (2009: 340).

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