

THE ARTS AS A FORM AND SPHERE OF THE DIALOGUE OF CULTURES

The arts are a special subsystem of the spiritual life of the society, where the artist realizes himself, creatively reproducing the reality in some or the other artistic images.

The special place among the numerous functions of the arts (aesthetic, social, compensatory, hedonistic, cognitive, prognostic, educational) is occupied by the function, which is rather rarely mentioned in textbooks and reference books — the communicative function. Today, in the environment of fierce confrontation between various states, military and political blocks, leaders of some countries, this function of the arts is becoming especially important. There are objective prerequisites for its realization. First, the arts are referred to cultural universals, i.e. elements, inherent to any culture both in diachronic (from primitive culture to contemporary culture) and synchronous (any of the cultures existing at present, from primitive to developed, has some or the others forms of arts) aspects. Second, the arts satisfy the natural need in dialogical digestion of both the culture of other nations and universal heritage. Third, the arts integrate and synthesize both national and cultural special features of a certain country, ethnos, and universal values.

It should be noted that the arts, as the history shows, can perform communicative functions even in the areas not directly connected with artistic processes. For example, *La Gioconda* was not included in the one hundred chef d'œuvres of the Louvre Museum until it was stolen on August 21, 1911. That raised hell in mass media and even became an additional factor for aggravation of international relations. The French accused the Germans of the theft, and the latter in their turn accused the French. The topic stayed in the headlines for a year and was so popular that bakers, waiters and other representatives of the service industry put miniature *La Gioconda* images on their overalls or aprons.

The painting was found two years later when the thief, Vincenzo Peruggia, tried to sell the *Mona Lisa* to the owners of the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, and they called the police. He admitted that he wanted to return *La Gioconda* to its Motherland.

The finding of the stolen picture again stirred interest of the public to it, and here the communicative function of the arts was manifested fully. The matter is that the Americans had NATO troops in France after World War II, the attitude of the French to that was as to a national humiliation, and they wanted to change the state of affairs. The picture was sent to the exhibition in the United States with the help of Jacqueline Kennedy, the wife of the then President of the USA, it was a sensation there and it was seen by more than 10 million people. As a result there were such public sentiments that served as the background to push the decisions at the state level. The Americans withdrew their troops from France and gave the French an opportunity to have their own army. Thus, this picture played an important role in the history of diplomacy.

The communicative function of the arts was traditionally manifested in the creative work of painters. For example, E. Delacroix made a lot of sketches when he travelled over North Africa, and later they were the sources of inspiration for him. This dialogue of the painter with the little-known in Europe culture later allowed to introduce the images of Arab men (*The Arabs before the City of Algiers*, *Arab Saddling his Horse*, *The Lion Hunt in Morocco*), Eastern women (*The Women of Algiers in their Apartment*, *Moroccan Women*, *Jewish Women of Algiers*) to the cultural space of France and other countries, to familiarize the public with special features of wedding rites and costumes of other nations (*The Bride of Abydos*, *Jewish Wedding in Morocco*). The architecture of Morocco (*City Wall of Meknes*, *Moroccan Courtyard*), elements of musical culture (tambourine and Arab lute in *Jewish Musicians in Morocco*) became accessible and interesting for the European public.

The same tradition is traced in the creative work of contemporary artists who bring numerous sketches and drawings from their journeys to various countries, and they serve the basis for creation of paintings becoming the form and factor of the

dialogue of cultures. The well-known woman artist from St. Petersburg Yevgenia Lysogorova lived in India for a long time and created a number of beautiful paintings reflecting genre scenes from the life of Indian and African people (*African Girl, Girl with a Flower, Residents of Africa, Buddhist Children, In Africa, Portrait of an Old Indian*). The contemporary Russian artist Yuri Kovalev managed to reflect the bright features of the Spanish culture, express his attitude to traditional Spanish entertainments in his picture *The Soul of Bullfight*.

The communicative function of the arts is also realized nowadays in exhibitions, biennale and festivals. This is one of the most mobile and dynamically developing forms of the fine arts' actualization. On the one hand, they have a strong historical tradition (exhibitions organized by S. Diaghilev; The Exhibition of Russian and Finnish Artists 1898, The International Exhibition of Paintings organized by *The World of Arts* magazine in 1899 and others), on the other hand, these forms became efficient means of communication of the arts and social environment in the contemporary artistic practice. The depictive artistic text becomes a communications channel in the space of exhibition, biennale, festival, both between the artist and the viewer, and between various periods, kinds of arts (painting, literature, sculpture, choreography, cinema, animation, etc.), cultures of various countries and nations.

Here the ability of one culture to master achievements of the other is realized fully, at the same time they mutually enrich one another. As M.M. Bakhtin wrote, "Alien culture reveals itself more fully and deeper only in the eyes of another culture... One meaning opens its depths meeting and coming in contact with another, alien meaning..., it's as if a dialogue starts between them, which overcomes the restraint and one-sidedness of these meanings, these cultures... In case of this dialogical meeting of two cultures, they do not merge and do not mix, but they are mutually enriched."¹

The Small Gallery of the Louvre Museum presents "The Theatre of Power" exhibition as a part of its third season (from September 27, 2017 to July 18, 2018),

¹ Bakhtin M.M. *The Aesthetics of the Verbal Creativity*. Moscow, 1986. P. 354.

which clearly demonstrates close ties between political power and the arts. The exhibition occupies several halls arranged according to the thematic principle. The “Images of Princes” hall tells about various roles, functions of monarchs — King-pastor, King-architect, King-warrior. The “Inclining to Legitimization of Power” hall is dedicated to Henry IV — the ruler who looked for national recognition. The portraits of monarchs, power regalia, coronation items, etc. are collected in the “Symbols of Power” hall. This exhibition is an entertaining show, where the connection of power and arts can be traced in various countries and various historical periods with the help of paintings and audio-visual effects.

Now, there is the “Form of Time” exhibition held in Vienna, at the Museum of Art History (from March 18 to July 8, 2018). This is the first group exhibition thought up by the Museum of Art History as a part of the “Modernity and the Present Time” program. It combines works of art created in the past centuries and in our times. There are works by Tiziano Vecellio and William Turner, Rembrandt van Rijn and Mark Rothko, Peter Paul Rubens and Maria Lassnig, Édouard Manet and Diego Velázquez displayed side by side.

The works of art are placed in the picture gallery halls in such a way as to find out and emphasize the similarity of historical and contemporary objects of creative understanding, views, values and wider — cultures. Visitors get an opportunity to look in the past and the present at the same time, compare works divided by hundreds of years and thousands of kilometers, see the succession and ties of cultures. The exhibits for this exhibition were provided by the British Museum and the Tate Gallery in London, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, Musée national Picasso and Musée d’Orsay in Paris, the Art Institute of Chicago as well as private collectors.

It’s important to emphasize that big artistic projects, uniting exhibits, artists and organizers from various countries, are realized no matter the political differences, economic wars and other forms of confrontations between countries. The arts’ ability to carry out the dialogue of cultures not only as a function but also as a kind of mission is seen in that, and the well-known phrase from F.M. Dostoevsky’s

novel *The Idiot* — “Beauty will save the world” — is perceived in this context as an appeal to all artists and prominent figures in the field of arts, to which they answer today as best as they can in various forms.