

Fedotova O.V., candidate of pedagogical sciences, associate professor, director of the Institute of traditional applied arts – Moscow branch of the Higher School of Folk Arts (Academy), 115573, Moscow, Musa Jalil str., 14, bldg.2, e-mail: o_fedotova@bk.ru

Mikhailova N.N., doctor of pedagogical sciences, professor, professor of the department of social-humanitarian and natural science disciplines of the Institute of traditional applied arts of the «Higher school of folk arts (academy)», 115573, Moscow, Musa Dzhaliya str., 14, bldg. 2, e-mail: 1325556@mail.ru

**An Artist's appreciation of traditional applied art:
from Visual communication to a work of art (article 1)**

Abstract. The article examines the process of organizing visual communication necessary for accumulating perceptual experience and developing observational skills as one of the significant professional qualities of a future artist in traditional applied arts. A thorough analysis of the terms "observational skill" and "communication" is conducted, and the relationship between observational skill and visual communication is substantiated. Definitions for "observational skill in traditional artistic crafts," "visual communication in traditional artistic crafts," and "decorative stylization" are provided. The author focuses on the forms of organizing student activities in general professional and professional disciplines used at the Institute of Traditional Applied Arts—a branch of the Higher School of Folk Arts (Academy)—which contribute to the cultivation of visually-aesthetic perception through visual communication, aiming to successfully design and create traditional applied art products.

Keywords: visual communication, visual experience, visually-aesthetic perception, extracurricular activity, observational skill, decorative stylization, artist of traditional applied arts.

*"The art lies in discovering the extraordinary within the ordinary
and the ordinary within the extraordinary."
— Denis Diderot*

This article is the first part of a series of analytical materials dedicated to the issue of developing visual communication skills among future artists specializing in traditional applied arts. The first part describes the experience of searching for and implementing innovative forms of organizing educational activities for students at the Institute of Traditional Applied Arts. The second part will focus on analyzing the methodology for developing observational skills and pedagogical support for students' visual communication.

In the rapidly evolving educational landscape, there is an ongoing need to enhance the content of artistic education in the field of traditional applied arts, which necessitates the development of approaches, methods, and formats for organizing

the educational process. Extensive professional experience in this domain and research findings [11; 12; 13] have enabled the author to identify and scientifically substantiate the problem of aesthetic observational skill development as a critical aspect of preparing future artists in traditional applied arts.

The concept of “observational skill in traditional artistic crafts” has been explored by the author in previously published scholarly articles, including the identification of observational skill as one of the conditions for fostering artistic perception in learners [12]. Additionally, an algorithm for creating a graphic design project during the training of decorative painters in the Moscow letter style was defined [11].

Based on terminological analysis, the following definition has been formulated: “Observational skill in traditional artistic crafts” refers to an integrated individualized outcome resulting from accumulated visual experience, based on the artist’s ability to notice, identify, analyze, and accumulate objects, details, elements, color combinations, and motifs that collectively serve as pictorial material for their decorative stylization in the creation of traditional applied art products.

Within the context of this formulation, decorative stylization is understood as a creative method aimed at modifying, reworking, or significantly transforming a prototype (e.g., a natural motif, an artistic image, or an art object), and its subsequent decorative generalization using specific artistic-graphic tools such as line, stroke, dot, spot, and rhythm. Stylization serves as a means of translating a visual image derived from the aesthetic perception of natural forms or works of art into a decorative form.

Observational skill is not only about visual experience but also a practical skill developed through systematic visual exercises. Any skill is understood as an action formed through constant repetition and brought to automatism. A skill is characterized, firstly, by a high degree of mastery of a particular action; secondly, by consistent quality reproduction of the action in various situations (including changing environmental conditions); and thirdly, by the absence of control, i.e., freedom in applying the technique.

Observational skill primarily pertains to perceptual skills and involves the sensory reflection of visual properties and characteristics of objects and phenomena in the surrounding world (such as shape, color, proportions, etc.). Visual perception determines the dependence of observational skill on the level of development of sensation and visual perception.

Observational skill is a developable skill. It can be assumed that it gradually evolves into an intellectual skill, which is understood as a person's general readiness to successfully solve various types of tasks—life-related, cognitive, communicative, creative, and others. An artist's readiness to solve creative problems acts as a dominant factor, but does not exclude the ability to address other tasks related to everyday life organization and professional activity. It is important to consider that the transformation of observational skill from a perceptual to an intellectual one depends on the development of mental processes such as memory, thinking, and imagination. Observational skill is influenced by individual traits and helps to

cultivate artistic taste and find one's unique style, which is highly valuable both for novice and experienced artists.

Observational skill develops only through active human interaction with the surrounding environment (R. Arnheim [1], M.M. Bakhtin, V.P. Zinchenko, et al.). Communication (communicatio) is understood as a "path of communication," a "form of connection," "a message from one person to another," as well as the process of transmitting or exchanging information [10, p. 240].

Communications are diverse, so there are several classifications that highlight different bases of communication: goals, content, transmission channel, participant composition, leading analyzer (modality), leading sensory system, form of communication, "language" of communication, duration, predicted and achieved results, and more.

In the context of our study, the most significant classification of communication types is based on the leading analyzer (modality) and the leading sensory system. It is known that under normal circumstances (i.e., without developmental pathology), humans perceive information through five communication channels (analyzers): 1) visual, 2) auditory, 3) tactile, 4) gustatory, and 5) olfactory. In addition, modern science distinguishes four types of sensory systems based on the primary communication channel with the external world: visual (dominance of the visual channel), auditory (dominance of the auditory channel), kinesthetic (dominance of sensory information obtained through object exploration), and digital (ability for internal dialogue based on logical thinking). It is essential to note that the dominance of a particular analyzer or sensory system does not imply the absence or weakness of another analyzer or system. The mechanism of dominance entails that one analyzer (or one sensory system) is leading, meaning it initiates the processes of perception, thinking, and imagination.

It can be hypothesized that an artist specializing in various types of traditional applied arts is likely someone with a dominant visual analyzer and a dominant visual system. (In this regard, the idea of developing tests and test assignments for a more objective assessment of students' readiness for their chosen profession and identifying potential risks and deficits seems promising.) Therefore, seeking effective ways to develop students' overall readiness for artistic activity and mastering the content of professional training in specialized disciplines should be focused specifically on visual communication. The demand for this direction is further driven by the fact that visual forms of communication are highly developed in today's world. It's no coincidence that the 21st century is often referred to as the era of visual culture. In the process of visual communication, information is captured, encoded, transmitted, and preserved using visual objects and/or their elements.

Researchers who have studied visual communication include R. Arnheim, V.P. Zinchenko, M.V. Osorina, and others. According to R. Arnheim, "Every act of visual perception represents an active examination of the object, its visual evaluation, selection of essential features, comparison with traces of memory, their analysis, and organization into a coherent visual image" [1, p. 19], thus positioning itself as *a dynamic and cognitive process*.

Visual communication implies a "dialogue" between the artist and the viewer in the space of objects in the surrounding world and works of art. Visual communication is interpreted as the process of transferring information from the artist to the viewer through visual forms and means (graphics, color, shape, drawing, symbols, ornamentation, typography, composition, execution techniques), which enhances the perception of the image, makes the visual sequence memorable, engaging the viewer in the informational and substantive aspects of the work, thereby contributing to increased motivation to acquire these items. Visual communication is also seen as the process of the artist's active interaction with the surrounding world in order to obtain information when "reading" objects in the environment—through visual perception and conveying them through an artistic image onto the picture plane.

Visual communication is crucial at all stages of creating artistic works, whether for artists working in academic painting, graphics, sculpture, or those engaged in traditional folk arts. Students' observational skills are developed through the pedagogical organization of the visual communication process.

All of the above served as the theoretical basis for addressing the problem associated with identifying and testing effective forms of organizing the activities of students at the Institute of Traditional Applied Arts, aimed at developing observational skills and enhancing abilities in visual communication.

Creating conditions for the development of visual communication is a part of the learning process for future artists in traditional applied arts [12].

In the course of establishing visual communication, instructors use verbal, visual, and practical teaching methods during classes in drawing, painting, and sculptural modeling. They introduce students to significant works by renowned artists, as well as to educational pieces stored in the institute's methodological collection.

By organizing outdoor sessions, instructors at the Institute of Traditional Applied Arts create opportunities for purposeful observations, where students search for specific shapes, proportions, color combinations, and compositional solutions. This transforms the process of visual perception into an organized and managed activity, aligned with specific learning objectives. Finally, each student accumulates individual visual experiences and develops observational skills. The teacher's task is to coordinate group and individual strategies so that all students successfully master the subject matter while completing assignments according to their own creative individuality, including their unique visual observational experiences.

When explaining assignments and setting artistic challenges, instructors draw students' attention to selecting objects and the compositional aspects of arranging them within the picture plane. They teach how to accurately depict primary and secondary motifs, explain linear and aerial perspective, detail elements, and convey light effects, color, tone, saturation, warmth-coolness, and other factors.

Many sketches and studies featuring landscape and architectural motifs can be selected by students for their creative assignments, which is characteristic of traditional applied arts. "An observed object, due to its character and texture, when included in the thoughtfully creative process of compositional exploration, triggers

a range of associations with previously seen artwork...the idea of transforming and refining the form is inspired by personal visual experience" [9, p. 14].

When organizing museum practice, instructors at the Institute of Traditional Applied Arts use research-based methods in their teaching. During practical sessions, each student, while examining museum exhibits, delves into history, becomes acquainted with a specific type of traditional craft, its essence, variety of artifacts, authors of works, diversity of compositions, and semantic content. E.I. Semenova notes, "Educational journeys in museums and urban spaces foster visual literacy and analytical skills. Independent extracurricular work stimulates the development of self-organization and self-control skills in students" [7, p. 74]. "This requires broad horizons, knowledge of the country's history, the evolution of art and traditional crafts, and oral folk traditions, in order to realize creative ideas at a high artistic level" [7, p. 71].

Design courses in specific areas of traditional applied arts, along with modeling and construction, involve practical work and creative exercises aimed at gathering the required illustrative material. These activities include finding relevant sources that align with the intended concept and facilitate the creation of artistic sketches, as well as producing preliminary paintings or rough drafts that require the student's full engagement in the creative-thinking process. For instance, when undertaking design projects, particularly during the initial familiarization and preparation stage—selecting the imagery that will later become part of the product's composition—the student pays meticulous attention to detailing plant motifs like leaves, rose blooms, peonies, chrysanthemums, and more. This detailed approach is a crucial link in the process of studying and understanding nature, yielding positive outcomes in visual communication.

While studying subjects such as "Art History" and "Traditional Applied Arts," as well as participating in educational practices, students at the Institute of Traditional Applied Arts engage in the following forms of educational activities: 1. Educational journeys in urban and museum environments; 2. Museum practice in regional-historical centers of traditional arts and crafts. Through these activities, students uncover the essence and diversity of traditional applied arts by exploring unique archival materials, authentic works, historical sources, and lesser-known research, which constitute intangible cultural heritage and treasures of specific regions.

During lecture-practical sessions, students complete assignments involving sketching historical samples from reserves and archives of traditional arts and crafts museums. They also participate in workshops designed to provide detailed, deep immersion in artistic creativity while studying specific types of traditional applied arts. Through these systematically integrated lessons across multiple disciplines, students continuously absorb new information. Ultimately, they build up a visual repertoire, leading to the next stage of the creative process—from observational skill to the emergence of an idea and the creation of an artistic image.

To illustrate, let's examine the pedagogical potential of extracurricular activities at the Institute of Traditional Applied Arts aimed at developing the visual experience of future artists. Analyzing the institute's reports revealed that just five

years ago, student participation in visiting exhibitions and museum displays was low, relegated solely to independent work, carried out sporadically and unorganized. However, over the past three years, teachers have reconsidered their approach to organizing visual communication and the importance of cultivating observational skills in traditional arts and crafts.

The educators at the Institute of Traditional Applied Arts have reviewed and rethought their approaches to educating contemporary students, focusing on the systematic study of the diverse world around us. This shift was facilitated by the organization of educational and cultural activities. Given Moscow's rich cultural heritage, with its vast array of landmarks, garden ensembles, estates, historical and architectural monuments, art museums, galleries, and exhibition complexes, instructors see their role in creating pedagogical scenarios that stimulate interest in exploring these genuine cultural sites, encouraging small-scale investigations.

After analyzing the programs and reports of the educational and mentoring process at the Institute of Traditional Applied Arts – Moscow Branch of the Higher School of Folk Arts, teachers created conditions for organizing the educational process during September-October of the 2024-2025 academic year directly in the collections of the metal department of the State Historical Museum in Moscow, with the aim of studying rare items with decorative artistic painting; in All-Russian Museum of Decorative Art – Exhibition "For the Sake of Craftsmanship. Artistic Crafts of Russia. Names of the 20th Century" as part of the project "Journey Home. Traditional Art of Russia" – Contemporary Lacquer Art "New Tales"; in museum complex "Gorki Leninskiye"; at the personal exhibition "Pearl of Russia – Unique Crimea" in the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation; in Museum of Russian Impressionism – Exhibition "Magazine of Beautiful Life" (Fig. 1²⁹), created from materials of the 19th-century commemorative magazine "Capital and Estate"; in Moscow Museum – Exhibition "Walk in the Garden. 10th Anniversary of EDEM Couture Fashion House"; in Engineer Hall of the Tretyakov Gallery – Exhibition "Disciples of Red. Maljavin and Arkhipov" (Fig. 2); in Memorial Museum "The S.T. Konenkov's Creative Studio" and in a State Darwin Museum (Fig. 3).

As part of the academic painting discipline, a one-day plein air excursion session was held at the Kuskovo Museum-Estate (Fig. 4). Its goal was to immerse students in a creative atmosphere within a real-life environment: teaching observational skills, attention, concentration, the ability to analyze and compare different depicted objects in terms of shape, scale, color, warmth-coldness, tone, and the ability to compose within a given format; to analyze and distinguish between main and secondary objects and states in the surroundings.

The plein air session allowed students to create paintings for a creative exhibition and immerse themselves in the atmosphere of the park ensemble, which some visited for the first time. "For a lacquer miniature painter, it is very important to be able to see and depict the surrounding world both in a realistic and flat manner" [4, p. 137].

²⁹ Fig. 1-4. Photo by the article's author.



Fig. 1. Exhibition "Magazine of Beautiful Life" at the Museum of Russian Impressionism.



Fig. 2. Exhibition "Disciples of Red. Maljavin and Arkhipov" in the Engineer Hall of the Tretyakov Gallery.



Fig. 3. Conducting a drawing lesson at the State Darwin Museum. Sketching animal and bird taxidermy specimens.

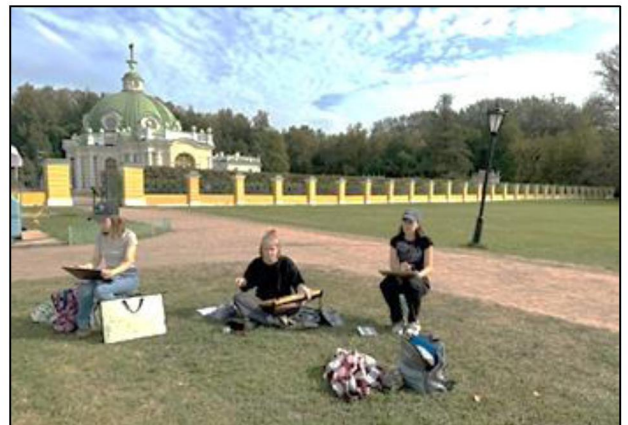


Fig. 4. Plein air session at the Kuskovo State Museum-Estate.

The findings of the study confirm that specially organized pedagogical support for visual communication allows future artists in traditional applied arts to gain a wide range of emotional sensations, forming and developing observational skills by processing individual impressions during interactions with the outside world. The most effective and productive form is the collaborative effort between the student and the instructor. Just as traditionally, expertise, skills, and knowledge were passed down from master to apprentice, similarly, the formation of professional skills at the current stage is achieved through the partnership between the teacher and the learner. The more creative, knowledgeable, and curious the instructor is, the stronger the student's motivation to learn something new and discover themselves as an artist in traditional applied arts.

Thus, "visual communication in traditional arts and crafts" is understood as a cognitive, reflective, and creative process of observation, deliberate scrutiny, as well as the development of visual attention, artistic thinking, and motivation for a

profound, detailed study of both objects in the surrounding world and historical sources, authentic works of art, with the aim of comprehending the profound essence of historical heritage, as well as the compositional, structural, technological, and technical aspects of material execution. Through the process of visual communication, the visual culture of the future artist is gradually shaped.

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