

***Pakhomova I.V.**, Candidate of philological sciences, Associate Professor, Associate Professor at the Department of Literature and Journalism, Ryazan State University named after S.A. Yesenin, Lecturer at the Ryazan Institute of Traditional Applied Arts - Branch of the Higher School of Folk Arts (Academy), 390046, Ryazan, Yesenin's Street, house 112, email: i.pahomova@365.rsu.edu.ru*

***Somova M.V.**, Candidate of philological sciences, Associate Professor, Associate Professor at the Department of Russian Language and Teaching Methodology, Ryazan State University named after S.A. Yesenin, Lecturer at the Ryazan Institute of Traditional Applied Arts - Branch of the Higher School of Folk Arts (Academy), 390046, Ryazan, Yesenin's Street, house 112, email: m.somova@365.rsu.edu.ru.*

### **Literary plots and motives as the foundation for the artistic image of works of traditional arts and crafts**

**Abstract.** The article examines the plots and themes of literary works as the basis for the artistic image of traditional arts and crafts. Plot is seen as an integral category in the system of arts, serving as an aesthetic principle of coherence, organization, and construction. Literary plot and motifs are viewed as essential components in the formation of special professional skills for future artists in traditional applied arts. The article provides examples from the study of Russian writers' works, demonstrating how assignments focusing on the comparison of thematic relationships between verbal and applied arts help shape these skills.

**Keywords:** literary plot, plot motifs, artistic thinking, applied arts, Russian language, literature.

Artistic thinking is a complex intellectual activity involving diverse sensual-emotional and cognitive manifestations characterized by depth, intuition, and figurative expression of ideas. While each artist's work is individual, it always exists within the context of tradition. The mystery of art lies in how life is reflected in individual creativity and how universal meanings are perceived through personal expression. An artist thinks in terms of his art, choosing a plot, outlining narrative schemes and motives, determining composition, and selecting expressive means guided by his interests, knowledge, and artistic preferences within his craft.

When implementing the higher education program in the field of Decorative and Applied Arts and Folk Crafts, concepts such as "plot," "plot motifs," and "plot schema" are frequently used in disciplines like "Russian Language," "Literature," and in the execution of academic and decorative drawing and painting.

In literary criticism, a plot is defined as an "artistically directed series of events, situations, and conflicts (actions, positions, including contradictory ones, and states of the hero)" [3, p. 258]. Motif refers to a "formally-thematic constant element of a work" [1, p. 230], often being a "traditional repeating (recurrent) element." Plot schema denotes a "historically stable structural model, invariant 'framework' of multiple real-life plots,

interconnected motivations whose order remains consistent, and where meaning is fixed by tradition" [3, p. 258].

In the professional practice of traditional craftsmen, these concepts are often used, especially when creating thematic works or organizing exhibitions. Plot and motif serve as integral categories in the art system, representing principles of ordering reality and transforming chaotic creative material into an art piece. As an aesthetic principle of coherence, consistency, and structure, the plot permeates all forms of art, including traditional applied arts.

The interdisciplinary connections between the structural elements of literature, Russian language, technology, materials science, composition, design, and performing arts, expressed in concepts, historical and biographical facts, and texts of professional topics do not raise doubts" [10]. Hence, it is crucial to pay considerable attention to subjects such as "Russian Language" and "Literature" in the middle-level professional education curriculum.

"Russian Language" helps enrich students with fundamental knowledge about applied arts terminology, lexical meaning of words, their origins, word formation, and grammar. Assignments completed in "Russian Language" courses aim to cultivate proficiency in writing texts in different styles. Acquired knowledge is later implemented in the creation of applied artworks.

For instance, a vocabulary exercise may involve exploring color names historically, encouraging students to expand their understanding of color theory. This activity fosters interest in color selection techniques, ultimately benefitting the production of high-quality applied art pieces.

When comparing literary plots with their embodiment in applied arts (such as palazzo painting, weaving, and embroidery) during Russian language classes, it is beneficial to introduce students to the history of color names. For example, asking them to research the origins of colors can inspire them to delve deeper into color theory, which ultimately contributes to more skillful execution of applied arts projects.

Thus, shades of colors can be thematically distributed as follows:

By an obsolete shade: bukharan (gray-beige), bousy, bosy (dark blue-gray or gray-blue: in A.S. Pushkin's work – "In the dungeon there a princess languishes, while a brown wolf serves her faithfully"), karamazov (black-faced, swarthy. In F.M. Dostoevsky's novel – "The Brothers Karamazov"), lily-white (gentle white, the color of a white lily, usually referring to human skin), ranjevy, ryzhevyy (the same as orange. In A. Gladkov's work: "Nowadays, ranje is fashionable..."), solovy (gray-yellow. Named after the nightingale);

By the name of precious and semi-precious stones: aventurine (crimson, dark red, named after the gemstone aventurine), slate-black (black-gray, the color of slate used for slates), adamantine (diamond-like), hyacinth-colored (indeterminate name. Red, violet, or dark blue, from "hyacinth," an outdated general term for precious stones. According to some sources, it refers to blue, emerald-green (from the outdated name) [6, p. 423];

By comparison with animals (their color): lovesick toad (greenish-gray), fainted frog (light greenish-gray, according to other indications, the color is undefined), bird-of-paradise (straw-colored, based on one type of bird-of-paradise);

By the proper name of a well-known person (family): Lord Byron (dark chestnut, almost brown, with a reddish tint), Esterhazy (silvery-gray, from the Esterhazy family, possibly related to the Esterhazy cake), Marquise de Pompadour (a shade of pink. She was actively involved in the creation of Sèvres porcelain. The rare pink color obtained through numerous experiments was named in her honor – Rose Pompadour);

By the names of mythological or biblical characters (scenes): Apollo (bright golden, from the name of the sun god Apollo), infernal flame, hell fire (lilac shade of red, or pearl-red, or black with red streaks), Judas tree (bright pink (the flowers of the Judas tree, or crape myrtle, are bright pink));

From barbarisms: blé-d'amour (bluish-gray (from French bleu d'amour – "loving blue"), found in Turgenev's "A Sportsman's Sketches");

By natural phenomena: frosty sky (azure blue), unforgettable sunset (soft pink or pale blue);

Specifically by the shade itself: automobile (grayish-blue, like the leading color of early 19th-century cars), spark, with a spark (with a metallic sheen, usually about fabric), moiré (shimmering (from French moire, the name of a shimmery fabric), fuchsia (intense pink, or purple-cherry, named after the flower fuchsia) [7].

This kind of work not only helps to develop speech but also broadens students' horizons, fosters their interest in Russian classics, the history of their country, and cultivates a sense of patriotism.

Among other types of tasks, one can suggest describing a picture or the surrounding world using new words that denote shades of color, finding examples from literary works, or coming up with titles themselves by employing metaphors.

For example, when turning to A.S. Pushkin's *The Tale of the Dead Princess and the Seven Knights*, we suggested describing the apple following the poet, who wrote: "And towards the princess, a ripe, young, golden apple flies... / It is full of ripe juice, so fresh and fragrant, so ruddy-golden, as if it were filled with honey! The seeds are visible through it..." [4]. Students had to describe the apple using both well-known and their own epithets, making it sound appetizing. The task turned out to be challenging. Even selecting color epithets was quite difficult. Some of the most striking ones included: transparent, honeyed, with a rosy cheek, reddened, like a red dawn, frosty cheeks, pinkish-red, with pink veins. However, no one managed to surpass the author's description, which disheartened the students since they initially thought the task would be easy. Nevertheless, the assignment was completed.

Here is a text written by Lydia Sh., a first-year student at a secondary vocational school:

*"I found it among the fallen leaves. As I bent down, I felt a scent so strong that even the boxes of apples in the store couldn't compare. I wanted to take a bite—no, to sink my teeth right into it—but the fear that the smell might lessen stopped me. I reveled in the apple's aroma, remembering how once, during my childhood, my parents and I went to a village to visit some acquaintances for apples. There were*

*so many that year that we collected them by the bucketful and piled them into the car trunk. Suddenly, a greedy goat came over, attracted by the smell, and started eating our apples from the open car...*

*I forgot about my worries and took a bite. A wave of such intense aroma washed over me that my head began to spin."*

Continuing to work with the text of a well-known fairy tale from childhood, we asked first-year students to describe the colors used by Palekh artists to illustrate it, using their own names or synonyms in Russian: pink (lilac, violet, cherry), blue (aquamarine, seafoam, sky, azure, evening, bell-like, cornflower), black (color of thick mist, night velvet, aspid, graphite, color of hell), red (carmine, brick, maiden's lips, poppy, bloody, tongues of flame, blood), green (salad, birch leaves, young pine, swamp, grassy, malachite) and others. This task turned out to be challenging for the students, requiring creativity and imagination despite its apparent simplicity. However, this form of exercise was enjoyed by the students.

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of working with students on the subject of "Literature." Fiction helps students develop vivid imagery about studied events or phenomena, which can later be applied in practical creative activities. For example, in Pavel Bazhov's tales "The Malachite Casket" and "The Silver Hoof," minerals—Ural gemstones—and embroidery techniques, such as selecting patterns and threads, are described. In Alexander Kuprin's novella "The Garnet Bracelet," the stones set into the heavy gold jewelry piece are very expressively depicted.

Applied arts and literature share methods of conveying emotions through visual images that allow authors to express their impressions, thoughts, worldviews, and perceptions. They are also united by an interest in the world and its history, in people and their inner worlds.

Classes in Russian language and literature "develop skills in working with different types of texts, knowledge of professionally significant concepts, and foster analytical and generalization abilities" [10], all of which are essential when creating artistic images and formulating ideas. Knowledge of fiction, deep understanding of writers' intentions, and insight into characters' internal experiences help students choose plots, themes, and images when developing their own art projects, drawing inspiration from folklore (such as Russian folktales, epics, and songs) or authorial works across various genres.

We chose to analyze the works of students from the Higher School of Folk Arts (Academy) in lacquer miniatures, embroidery, and lacemaking not without reason. We work with students at the Ryazan branch, which explains our focus on embroidery and lacemaking. As for lacquer miniatures, which our branch does not specialize in, turning to this type of applied art is due to the fact that it most clearly and consistently demonstrates the connection between literary plots and motifs and traditional craftsmanship.

In this study, we employed observation, analysis, and comparative methods. While writing the article, we analyzed the works of graduates from the past eight years (from 2016 to 2024). More than 20 graduates of vocational education were examined, allowing us, in our opinion, to draw sufficiently objective conclusions.

Students of the Higher School of Folk Arts, while creating compositions in the tradition of Palekh lacquer miniatures, turn to the works of A.S. Pushkin. Figure 1 shows an artistic-graphic project of the composition "Song of Wise Oleg" (Fig. 1). In the foreground of the narrative composition are Wise Oleg with his retinue and the sorcerer Perun. The white shirt of the magician symbolizes the purity of his thoughts, and the wreath represents closeness to nature. Behind the old man is a forest that nourishes and saves him, granting solitude and inspiration. The sorcerer's attire is deliberately unassuming. His staff emphasizes both age and wisdom. The student evidently draws upon the poet's exquisite epithets for her creation: "the inspired magician, the submissive old man to Perun alone, the messenger of future decrees." The sorcerer fears neither the prince nor his retinue; his prophecies come from "heavenly will," and his speech is "truthful and free" [4].

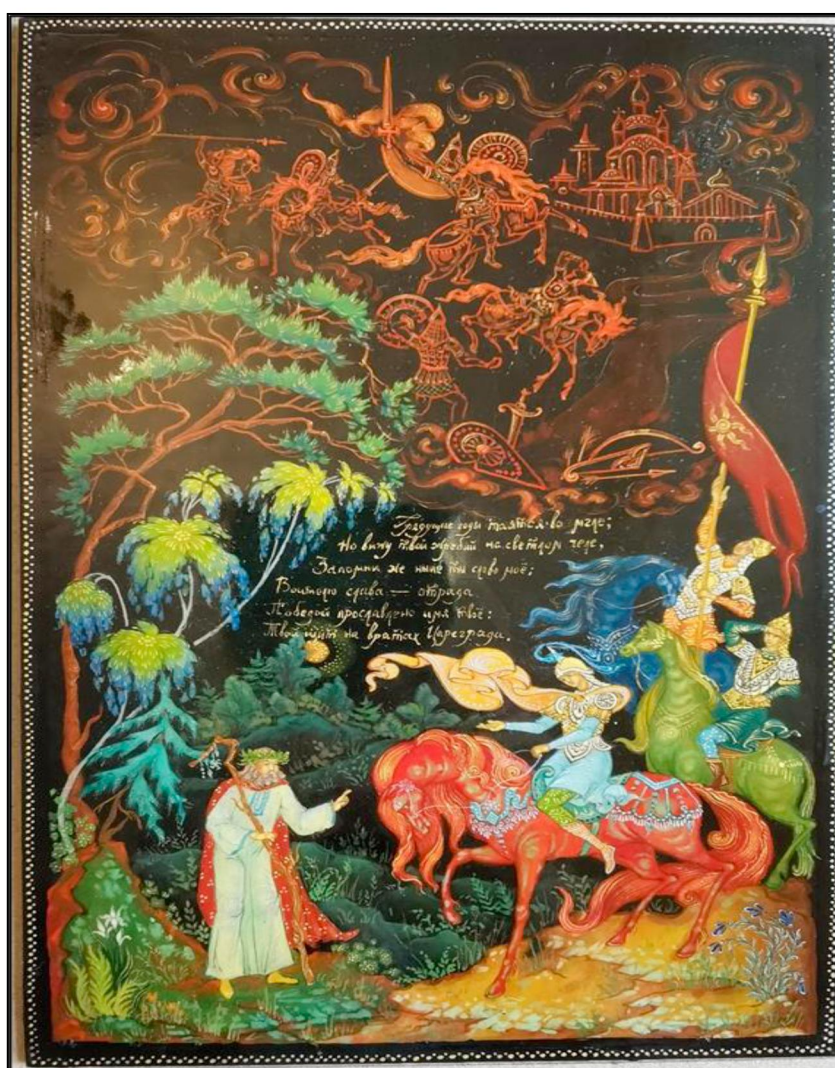


Fig. 1. Volkova O. Artistic-graphic design of the Palekh lacquer miniature painting based on A.S. Pushkin's work "Song of Wise Oleg." 2023. Supervisor I.V. Kostycheva. Higher School of Folk Arts.

The images of the prince and his warriors are rendered in bright colors. The fire-horse, on which the rider's life depends in battle, is adorned with rich harness, and the armor of Wise Oleg and his knights is meticulously detailed. The prince feels

like the ruler of the land, backed by power and what he believes to be justice. He is accustomed to punishing and forgiving. But not this time: the miniature depicts the unexpected encounter between Wise Oleg and the magician who promised him glory, fortune, and dominion over the world. Here we see the student's remarkable discovery – two-thirds of the picture are occupied by the sorcerer's predictions, painted against a black background. First, golden Slavic calligraphy, then above it – the future great deeds of the prince: his name is "glorified by victory," both "waves and land" are subservient to him, finally, his "shield hangs on the gates of Tsaregrad." The end of the great destiny is not marked in the composition, giving it a special light hue.

In illustrations for one of A.S. Pushkin's most enchanting tales, Palekh artists use traditional colors: gold, blue, red, and green on a dark background, along with their shades. This is connected less with the characteristics of the craft and more with the ancient tradition of decorating clothing with ornamental designs as talismans rather than just for beauty [5].

Another plot by A.S. Pushkin, taken as the basis for a work of Palekh lacquer miniature painting, is the famous story "The Blizzard" (Fig. 2). The plot of the story is adventurous. It is based on a "comedy of situations": the groom arrives late for a secret wedding, having lost his way in a blizzard, and another man marries his betrothed instead. Nature is to blame for everything: snow and blizzards prevented the wedding. The first, openly adventurous part of the story inspired the author of this composition. At the center of the miniature is a church, painted in bright but delicate colors, a confused priest who doesn't understand what's going on, a senseless bride surrounded by devoted servants. The accidental officer, recently married to a stranger, is bewildered and considers it best to leave everything as it is. His figure in the foreground is symbolic: everything happened too quickly, and he doesn't understand what the participants expect from him. And in the background, to the left of the temple, is the trio of the groom lost in the blizzard—a wonderful solution by the author of the miniature. The basis of the conflict, its essence, and the main characters of the story are carefully portrayed. Each has been given exactly the place allotted to them by A.S. Pushkin in his story.

And another very important element of the miniature is the snow! A.S. Pushkin loved Russian winter. In "The Blizzard," he painstakingly describes the snow itself, which is the direct protagonist and driver of the plot: "The wind rose, and there was such a blizzard that he <Vladimir> could no longer see anything. In a moment, the road was covered; the surroundings disappeared in a murky yellowish haze, through which flakes of snow flew; the sky merged with the earth. <...> The horse stumbled blindly and constantly either drove onto a snowdrift or fell into a hole; the sleds kept tipping over" [4]. The author of the miniature composition takes this circumstance into account: snow occupies a central place in it, under the feet of the main characters, above the church, even in the frame where snowflakes are used, because it is this natural phenomenon that changed the destinies of several people. It seems that the author of the miniature managed to convey the spirit and atmosphere of Pushkin's story, not to mention the color scheme of the picture, which is executed in Palekh tones.



Fig. 2. Kozemyants A. Artistic-graphic design of the Palekh lacquer miniature painting based on A.S. Pushkin's work "The Blizzard." 2023.  
Supervisor I.V. Kostycheva. Higher School of Folk Arts.

Lace-making and embroidery are traditional folk crafts of Ryazan and the surrounding area. Multicolored Ryazan embroidery is dominated by red shades interspersed with blue, yellow, and green. These vibrant colors are borrowed directly from nature and symbolize life. Natural and landscape motifs predominate in Ryazan embroidery.

The artistic-graphic project of the panel "Ryazanochka" refers us to a familiar theme: the search for a missing husband (fiancé) of the heroine (Figure 3<sup>32</sup>). In the Ryazan region, this theme is represented by the story of Avdotya Ryazanochka, whose image is clearly embodied in the presented panel. Having lost her entire family, Avdotya decided to rescue them from captivity, but the khan promised to release only one man of her choice in exchange for the immortal herb: her husband, son, or brother. Avdotya chose her brother, because once she loses her kin, she will never regain it. Impressed by the wisdom of the Russian woman, the khan released her whole family.

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<sup>32</sup> Figures 3-6: Photos from the methodological collection of the Ryazan Institute of Traditional Applied Arts - a branch of the Federal State Budget Educational Institution of Higher Education "Higher School of Folk Arts (Academy)".

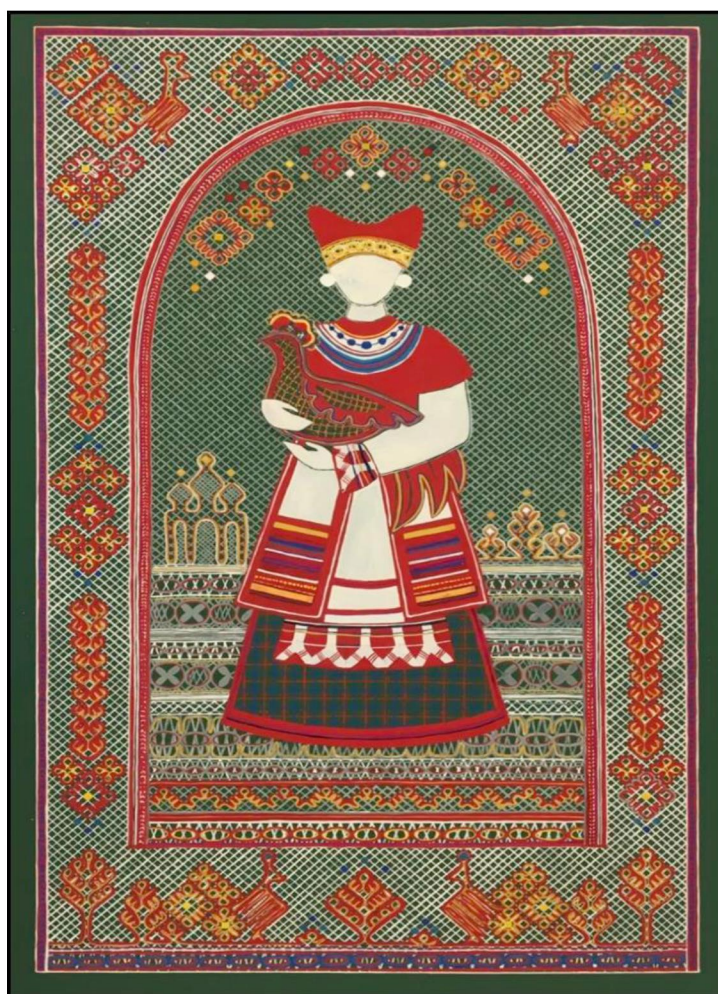


Fig. 3. Chirkova V.V. Artistic-graphic design of the panel "Ryazanochka." 2022.  
Multi-pair scanning, interlocking, numerical braiding techniques.  
Instructor D.Yu. Voronina

Executed in the technique of multi-pair scan, interlocking, numerical braiding, the canvas depicts the legendary wife of Ryazan, a faithful wise spouse who earned the respect of the Tatar khan himself. The student chooses a muted green shade as the background. Christian symbols are present in the ornament: a combination of bird images (symbolizing the purity of thought and fidelity of the heroine) with plant motifs (symbols of life). In the center of the panel is a woman in a stylized Ryazan costume in red, white, blue, and yellow, holding a chicken as a symbol of home comfort; the kika with two "horns" indicates that before us is indeed a woman, a wife and mother, wise from life experience, yet still young and strong, capable of bearing sons (since the hen also symbolizes fertility and childbirth). It appears that the successful discoveries of the author and her scientific supervisor include, firstly, the background of the panel: beneath the heroine's feet lies the Russian land itself (horizontal rows with repeating scenes), with God guiding her (Orthodox churches in the background); secondly, the second frame, made in the shape of a hemisphere. This form is undoubtedly multifaceted: it signifies protection, righteousness, a martyr's crown, the difficulty of choice, and the sanctity of a woman as the keeper of the home, family, love, and peace.



In the panel project, we note a very successful combination of historical-literary plot with applied art: the story of Avdotya inspired the student to create an artistic canvas, and knowledge of folk braiding traditions helped bring the plot to life through applied art.

Traditional products of Ryazan lacemakers featured wavy plant and geometric motifs, which were already being executed in colored silk at the beginning of the 19th century. Mikhailovskoye lace, with its various types of braiding—airy multi-pair ("Ryazan style") and interlocking ("Babylonian"), used to weave trees, bushes, birds, animals, fantastic creatures, and other constant motifs—was particularly valued.

An example of the connection between a literary (fairy-tale) plot and lacemaking is the artistic-graphic project of the lace panel "Alenkii Tsvetochek" based on S.T. Aksakov's fairy tale of the same name (Fig. 4). For his youngest daughter Nastenka—embodiment of gentleness and kindness—the merchant picked a coveted flower, unaware that he had incurred the wrath of a forest monster. The background of the panel is rendered in soft shades of blue-gray, pale green, and milky-white—colors of nature, with which the heroine is in harmony. A successful find here is the squirrel toward which Nastenka reaches out. The forest beauty is not afraid of the girl, benevolently awaiting her caress. Even the color of the heroine's dress and the squirrel's fur match, standing out against the gentle background of the panel. The silhouette of the central figure convinces the viewer that this is indeed a girl: the tall headwear and veil are attributes of a maiden. The creators of the panel succeeded in depicting the foreground: the dark-red flower not only harmonizes with the color of the heroine's dress but also symbolizes the mystery and ambiguity of the "nature" of this magical plant. The leitmotif of the fairy tale is embodied in Nastenka's words, repeated several times: "So that's what you look like, little scarlet flower"—with varying intonation. The fact that the flower has its own history is shown by the white stem, tangled and twisted with numerous bends and intertwining, resembling a puzzle or labyrinth, or perhaps a guiding thread leading the heroine to a happy ending... This motif is effectively presented by a specially designed embroidery without beginning or end. Only the white color of the embroidery? Apparently, here the rules are dictated by the laws of color compatibility.

It seems that the authors of this panel have exceptionally successfully incorporated a third kind of art into their work—the masterpiece of domestic animation "Alenkii Tsvetochek." The plotlines of this cartoon subtly but distinctly permeate the lace panel through embroidered elements, execution techniques, colors, and ornamentation, with the lower edge reminiscent of ocean waves washing up on the monster's island... Together, they create a unique, original work executed in the technique of applied folk art (interlocking and numerical braiding) based on a literary plot.



Fig. 4. Shamova L.V., Akulina N.E. Artistic-graphic design of the lace panel "Alenkii Tsvetocek." 2016. Interlocking and numerical braiding techniques.  
Instructor: D.Yu. Voronina

Another example of using a literary plot in the creation of a lace panel is the canvas mentioned earlier, based on P. Ershov's fairy tale "The Little Humpbacked Horse" (Fig. 5). Once again, in the foreground, as in the story of Avdotya-Ryazanochka, is embroidery imitating sea waves, over which ships run past the doomed sea monster:

*Here, he rides into the clearing,  
Straight to the sea-ocean;  
Across it lies  
The wonder-beast fish-whale.  
All its sides are gouged,  
Palisades driven into its ribs,  
On its tail, a noisy cheese feast rages,  
While a village stands on its back;  
Peasants plow along its lip,  
Boys dance between its eyes,  
And in the grove, amidst its mustache,  
Girls hunt for mushrooms.*

This particular plotline, conveying the theme of divine anger and punishment for misdeeds, is captured on the panel:

*What, without God's commandment,  
He swallowed among the seas—  
Thirty ships in total.  
If he grants them freedom,  
God will lift his misfortune.  
Instantly, all wounds will heal,  
And he'll reward him with long life...*

P. Yershov [8]

The success of the authors can be seen in the settlement on the back of the wonder-beast, created using interlocking braiding techniques: these are trees, a mill, and a temple. The skillfully chosen colors make the panel especially appealing: blue-gray-white-greenish tones mimic the color of sea waves, while brown and yellow represent the earth, since "A village stands on its back; Peasants plow along its lip, Boys dance between its eyes, And in the grove, amidst its mustache, Girls hunt for mushrooms" [8]. The image created by the students is clearly inspired by the text of the fairy tale and adheres to the traditions of applied art.

Traditionally, the frame is treated separately but in conjunction with the color and tones of the panel, making it a work of art in its own right.



Fig. 5. Mikityuk A.A., Strokina K.G. Artistic-graphic design of the lace panel "Wonder-Beast Fish-Whale." 2016. Interlocking and numerical braiding techniques. Instructor: D.Yu. Voronina



Fig. 6. Bochkareva P. Lace set "Garnet Bracelet." Final qualification work. 2013.  
Supervised by D.Yu. Voronina

As previously mentioned, the basis of the plot of an applied art product can be a literary plot. Thus, in 2023, P. Bochkareva defended her final qualifying work titled "Garnet Bracelet" under the supervision of D.Yu. Voronina (Fig. 6)—a coif and collar for a blouse (artistic lacemaking). The title of the work refers to the eponymous work by A.I. Kuprin: the bracelet played a fateful role in Zheltkov's life and a dramatic one in the Shein family. The paired items, executed in interlocking braiding technique, remarkably intersect with the description of the bracelet in the story: "The bracelet was gold, low-grade, very thick, but hollow, and on the outside completely covered with small antique, poorly polished garnets. But in the middle of the bracelet, five beautiful garnet cabochons, each the size of a pea, stood out, surrounding some strange little green stone. ... Deep within them,

under their smooth egg-shaped surface, suddenly lit up charming dense-red living fires" [9]. The foundation of the lace ensemble is a dark red color with inclusions of other colors. The transition of different shades of garnet is very successfully conveyed, indicating careful reading of A.I. Kuprin's story and resulting in a resonance between the verbal image and the lacework.

Turning to literary tradition, the plots of works by Russian writers and poets, is characteristic of the art of traditional folk crafts. The close relationship between book culture and folk applied art in general is a distinctive feature of Russian art: "An interesting and important page of Old Russian culture, in which decorative art plays a significant role, is the act of writing itself, which largely retains its semantic and pictorial roots. Each capital letter is a complex system of images of various levels of generalization – from the most ancient universal ideas to those strictly national, peculiar to Russian culture" [2, pp. 53-54].

Russian art, particularly literary and applied art, "is based on the fusion of Slavic pagan culture with the features of Christian culture... The ornamentation of Ancient Rus' is a unique blend of elements from Christian culture and pagan folk motifs" [2, p. 38]. Masters of all generations in Russia's leading crafts—Rostov finift, Skopinskaya and Pskov ceramics, Torzhok gold embroidery, Palekh lacquer miniature painting, Khokhloma wood painting, Mikhailovsky and Yelets lacemaking—have harmoniously revealed and embodied the universal ideas of the Russian worldview through their unique means of expression. However, it is impossible to encompass the vast scope of Russian applied art with its plots, plot schemes, and motifs that resonate with oral folklore and verbal artistic expression. Therefore, we decided to select for consideration those works of traditional arts and

crafts created by students of the Higher School of Folk Arts (Academy) in St. Petersburg (Palekh lacquer miniature painting) and Ryazan (embroidery and lace).

It is clear that the plot is an important component in the development of specific professional skills for future artists in traditional applied arts, and literary plots often serve as the foundation for the artistic image in traditional arts and crafts. During classes in the aforementioned disciplines, attention should be drawn to such connections between the arts, which facilitate comprehensive orientation in the world of artistic creation, understanding its principles and the language of art, and encourage engagement with literary plots for personal professional growth.

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