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### **Bogorodskoe artistic wood carving: international master classes**

**Abstract.** The article aims to introduce the reader to Bogorodskoe artistic wood carving and its significance in the modern world. The Russian university of traditional arts and crafts (formerly known as the Higher school of folk arts (academy)) is introducing the art of wood carving to the global community. The process of transferring knowledge and skills through master classes is an important element in building a universal, international cultural community.

**Keywords:** international master classes, Bogorodskoe artistic carving, Russian culture.

Bogorodskoe wood carving represents a significant spiritual and artistic resource for Russia that requires not only preservation but also active development and relevance in contemporary society. This unique phenomenon of Russian art is deeply rooted in the history and culture of the country. Products such as wooden toys and sculptures possess not only aesthetic value but are also an essential part of cultural heritage, reflecting ideas about the world, labor, beauty, moral values and spiritual ideals. Bogorodskoe wood carving is a living testimony to history, traditions and the soul of the Russian people, embodying the essence of the Russian spirit, which reflects the peculiarities of mentality, way of life, traditions and folklore. In the works of Bogorodskoe carvers, one can see echoes of fairy tales, proverbs and sayings, making them not just souvenirs or objects of entertainment, but true works of art filled with national color and deep meaning. They reflect the Russian worldview, its humor, wisdom, optimism and courage.

For Bogorodskoe wood carving, linden wood is traditionally chosen due to its high-tech qualities such as softness and uniform structure. Linden wood is virtually unaffected by cracking, warping, or shrinkage, making it ideal for carving; its light, almost white color gives products aesthetic appeal, while its plasticity allows for creating complex and detailed patterns. Thus, linden becomes the perfect choice for creating high-quality and durable items that retain their beauty over many years.

The Bogorodskoe institute of artistic wood carving – a branch of the Russian university of traditional arts and crafts – is the only center in Russia and the world that prepares artists with higher education in the field of Bogorodskoe wood carving. Its graduates do not merely copy, but are capable of creating unique, highly artistic projects and then materializing them. These works of art play a significant role in educational activities aimed at fostering interest in this art form, primarily through exhibitions and masterclasses.

Given the regional-historical, artistic-technological, coloristic and aesthetic traditions of Bogorodskoe wood carving, masterclasses become an essential means for passing on these knowledge and skills to new generations, ensuring continuity and development of this unique art in modern society. The purpose of domestic Russian masterclasses lies in the following aspects:

1) ***Introduction to the profession:*** participants of the masterclasses get acquainted with various aspects of being a woodcarver, including the creation process, selection of materials and tools, as well as specifics of working with clients and the market.

2) ***Development of practical skills:*** masterclasses provide participants with opportunities not only to observe experienced masters at work but also to practice independently, contributing to the formation of necessary professional abilities and skills.

3) ***Understanding cultural significance:*** participants come to realize that their work is not only about crafting beautiful items but also about preserving and developing cultural traditions, giving their activity profound meaning.

4) ***Inspiration and motivation:*** interacting with experienced artists and other participants can inspire young individuals to choose a career related to art and help them envision prospects for growth in this field.

In addition to domestic Russian exhibitions and masterclasses, the Russian university of traditional arts and crafts regularly organizes events in foreign countries: art exhibitions, masterclasses, varying in content depending on the location, artistic-educational environment, equipment and curriculum specifically designed for each masterclass. While domestic Russian masterclasses focus on in-depth study of local traditions and techniques, international masterclasses allow participants to acquire only rudimentary knowledge and skills, facilitating an understanding of the essence of Bogorodskoe wood carving.

Thus, international masterclasses represent an educational and enlightening process that contributes not only to generating interest in Bogorodskoe wood carving as one of the types of traditional arts and crafts but also, through the high aesthetics of this art, allows one to explore our country, Russia. In addition, international masterclasses foster interest in the art of wood carving and, to some extent, encourage certain compatriots to return to their historical homeland to pursue higher education in this field.

An invaluable benefit of conducting masterclasses is filling the void of creative environments for children abroad: international masterclasses help create a creative platform for children and youth who may lack access to cultural and artistic initiatives in their home countries. Thus, international masterclasses in Bogorodskoe wood carving go beyond mere training; they establish unique platforms for strengthening international ties, creative self-expression and spiritual enrichment among participants. International masterclasses have several distinctive features:

- challenges in working with tools subject to natural wear and tear, along with the inability to fully resharpen tools at the masterclass venue;

- uncertainty regarding the composition of participants and their level of preparation and interests: each masterclass attracts a diverse group of attendees. This

necessitates rapid adaptation of teaching approaches, requiring flexibility and professionalism from organizers and instructors.

To conduct the masterclass, a training program was developed covering two levels of instruction. The first-level masterclass is intended for those encountering the art of wood carving for the first time. The objectives of the masterclasses include familiarizing participants with the history of the origin and development of Bogorodskoe wood carving; teaching basic techniques of Bogorodskoe wood carving; and acquiring skills in working with materials and professional tools. The workshop begins with an introduction to safety techniques and rules when using tools.

After familiarization with safety procedures, a brief overview of the history of Bogorodskoe wood carving, its cultural significance and its development in Russia is provided.

The task of the practical part of the masterclass is to create a flat item from a linden cross-section using templates of animal silhouettes (bear, fox, hare). Participants receive pre-prepared templates and learn how to properly position them on the surface of the wooden blank, avoiding defects in the wood. During the carving process, excess wood mass is removed using a chisel, starting from the edges and gradually moving towards the center. Then, the correct carving technique is explained, allowing participants to feel confident working with the tool and effectively complete the task. The final stage involves sanding the product (Fig. 1<sup>17</sup>).



Fig. 1. Toy "Bear Silhouette."

Sample for execution during the masterclass



Fig. 2, 3. Toys "Bear with movable paws" or "Owl with movable wings."

Samples for execution during the masterclass

The first level of masterclasses serves as a foundation for the second level, which focuses on expanding knowledge and mastering more advanced techniques, transitioning from flat items to semi-volumetric ones with moving elements, such as "Bear with movable paws" or "Owl with movable wings" (Fig. 2, 3).

Unlike the first-level masterclasses, this session introduces new technological techniques for decorative processing of the product with a chisel, such as the "basket weave" pattern (representing fur texture on a bear or feathers on an owl) and the "ripple" effect (mimicking tree bark where the owl perches). Work begins with decorating the main

<sup>17</sup> Fig. 1- 3. Photo by the article's author.

volume of the figure, as this helps participants adapt to hand positioning and proper tool handling techniques.

The next step is decorative processing of the head, which is a delicate and meticulous task requiring special attention. Afterward, decorative treatment must be applied to all moving parts. When processing the wings, chisels of two diameters—No. 8 and No. 3—are used. For processing the paws, only one chisel is employed, but the number of details increases from two to four. Once all tasks related to wood carving are completed, the toy is fully assembled. To achieve this, all components need to be correctly positioned on the backside of the item, interconnected with thread in a particular manner and secured with screws. The correct movement of the owl's wings or the bear's paws depends on the accurate connection of the parts. Once you've ensured that all mechanisms function properly, you can secure the thread onto the hook of the "Owl with moving wings" toy or onto the wooden bead of the "Bear with moving paws" toy.

Discipline is a crucial factor throughout all levels of the masterclass. While working with sharp tools, distractions like conversations should be avoided. Attention is given to the sequence of operations and explanations are provided on potential challenges at every stage. Aspects such as the orientation of wood fibers in the piece, finger placement and the correct positioning of the item itself are emphasized. After reviewing the finished pieces, participants shared their thoughts and impressions about the process of making wooden toys and the end result.

Essentially, the developed programs and conducted masterclasses served as a pedagogical experiment involving 217 participants, demonstrating a 100% interest in traditional Russian arts and crafts, including Bogorodskoe wood carving. Furthermore, 90% of those trained in the first level of masterclasses unexpectedly progressed to the second level, further confirming the appeal of Bogorodskoe wood carving as a unique form of traditional Russian arts and crafts.

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