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### **The significance of the animalistic theme in the education of future jewelry artists in academic sculpture and small form decorative plastic classes**

**Abstract.** The article examines the significance of animalistic themes in teaching academic sculpture and small form decorative plastic arts in the professional training of future jewelry artists. The development of spatial thinking as the foundation for acquiring the skills necessary for future artists to create products based on volumetric forms is emphasized. The article provides a detailed review of educational tasks related to the depiction of animals and birds, and presents a methodology for applying existing professional tools. This enables students to understand and master the plastic and artistic language characteristic of animalistic themes in jewelry design.

**Keywords:** animalistic art, sculpture, training specifics, small form decorative plastic arts, volume, relief, shape, art, composition, transformation, stylization

For a significant portion of jewelry artworks, the volumetric form serves as the structural basis of the pieces, indicating that academic sculpture and plastic modeling are among the core artistic disciplines in the professional training of jewelers. Specifically, academic sculpture provides the knowledge that enables students to comprehend the unique plastic structure of surrounding objects, helping them analyze the constructive features and character of the forms of models when creating volumetric, relief and spatial compositions [8, p. 1].

Classes in plastic modeling, in addition to teaching the modeling of volume and relief forms, also involve a more subtle, sometimes jeweler-like processing of surfaces, conveying the characteristics and nature of the depicted object. Virtually all this knowledge forms the basis of professionalism and finds application in the field of jewelry art, where concepts such as volume, proportions, relief and texture are the main means of expression.

The thematic range of jewelry has always been and remains rich, multifaceted and diverse, offering a variety of different motifs [7]. One of the most intriguing themes is the animalistic one, as it allows for the exploration of the rich "palette" of the animal world and human relationships with it. This theme is capable of reflecting virtually the entire spectrum of human interactions: from everyday and family needs and tasks (domestic animals, hunting, etc.) to complex, socially conditioned contacts that reflect societal hierarchies (serfdom, slavery, representative gifts, etc.).

Since ancient times, people have adorned themselves with images of animals, choosing symbols of animals whose qualities they wished to possess. Jewelry acquires a special sacred meaning, becoming talismans, amulets and protective charms. Throughout the history of jewelry art, virtually all images of the animal world existing on our planet have been created. Pendants, bracelets, earrings and rings can be decorated with various animals and birds: horses, lions, wolves, deer, hummingbirds, peacocks, eagles, owls, etc.

The animalistic theme and interest in it in jewelry art remain relevant today [10]. To create high-quality and artistic pieces, professional training is required, which is provided by the artistic disciplines "Academic Drawing," "Academic Sculpture and Plastic Modeling" and "Plastic Anatomy." To achieve the necessary knowledge in sculpture, a full course of study is required: from the first basic principles of working with volume to the creation of complex creative plastic compositions [2].

Before starting practical assignments on sculptural representations of birds and animals, it is necessary to familiarize students with the works of renowned sculptors in the field of animalistic genre: V. Vatagin, I. Efimov, A. Belashov, A. Martz, P. Klodt, A. Ober, who have made a significant contribution to the study of the animal world [4].

At the core of any sculptural representation lies drawing and sketches, which are given special attention when studying nature. The collection of visual illustrative material allows for a comprehensive understanding of the anatomical structure of birds and animals. (Fig. 1-7<sup>83</sup>). Preliminary material selection is also essential in jewelry design projects.



Fig. 1-3. Sketches of birds

Before sculpting volumetric sketches, it is advisable to make preliminary sketches aimed at studying and understanding the morphological features of the animal (Fig. 6, 7), so that by accurately reproducing the proportions and structure, the character of the model can be understood and most accurately conveyed in a volumetric image. Similar tasks are set for preliminary sketches in the design of products on the animalistic theme. However, in these sketches, students' attention is focused on the fact that the selection of this material is also aimed at finding

<sup>83</sup> Fig. 1-13. Photo by the article's author.

applications and organically incorporating these images into the structural compositional solution of jewelry items.



Fig. 4, 5. Bird sketches

A distinctive feature of jewelry is its decorative nature. Therefore, there is a need to transform realistic images into decorative ones using plastic means. In this process, the scale relationships of compositional parts can be altered and the dynamics of movement can be enhanced, both within the structure of the elements and in their relationships with each other. Building a stylized image requires emphasizing structure, introducing clear compositional organization, which includes the presence of a center and "pauses" that are consistent with the number of elements. Thus, images of animals and birds, which are the main part of the overall composition, need to be transformed and subordinated to the overall style of the jewelry piece.

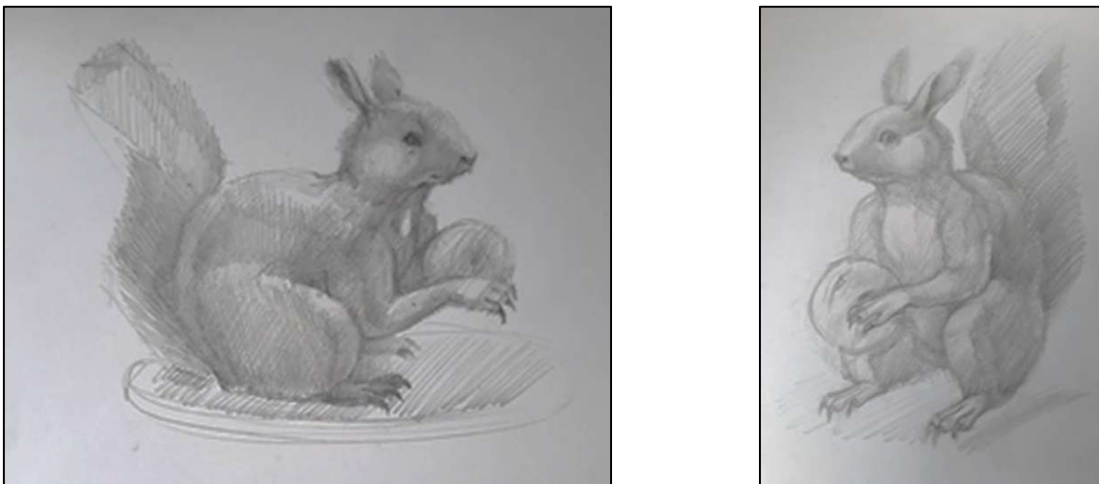


Fig. 6, 7. Sketches of a stuffed squirrel

In decorative stylization, the structuring of rhythmically organized elements, characteristic of ornamentation, is also used. For example, rows of feathers in birds or fur in animals. This involves the geometrization of plasticity, which is based on a constructive approach to building volumetric images. It is necessary to discern this in natural forms, understand it and subordinate it to the rules of constructing relief

or volumetric images. An important part of stylization is finding an expressive silhouette and ensuring the consistency of the overall movement within the elements with the overall movement as a whole.

The methodology of depicting animals and birds is one of the important components of the academic sculpture program, based on the study of plastic anatomy (Fig. 8; 9).

Plastic anatomy is an integral part of the artistic education system. It studies the external forms and proportions, the plasticity of the bodies of animals and birds, based on the study and understanding of the properties of the skin, the peculiarities of the muscular system and the structure of the skeleton in motion and at rest. Knowledge of plastic anatomy is a necessary component in the design and creation of products using the animalistic theme, as images of animals and birds, even in their stylized form, should not contain distortions in anatomy or errors in proportions.

This is one of the serious problems that needs to be addressed in the training of future jewelry artists. Works executed in a realistic academic style and translated into solid material can be self-sufficient creations. Considering the specifics of the applied purpose of the created works of jewelry art, where the emphasis is on decorative expressiveness, a realistic animalistic depiction may not correspond and may even contradict the style of the piece. Primarily, jewelry pieces have a decorative artistic solution.



Fig. 8. Anatomical sketch of the skeletal structure of birds



Fig. 9. Anatomical sketch of the skeletal structure of a squirrel

An example of harmoniously balanced plant elements with decorative bird images is the graduation project by A. Pokhvalenskaya, the necklace "Paradise Birds" (Fig. 10). The unified style of proportionate floral elements, leaves and birds, arranged in a seamless composition, allows the work to be perceived as a cohesive piece. The central part with the image of the birds is particularly emphasized in its design, complemented and enhanced by plant components executed in the same style.

In the semester project by I. Emelyanchuk, "Pendants "Bird" (Fig. 11), the main means of expression were lines—rhythmically arranged and structured

compositional elements. This allowed the author to harmonize the form, decoration and purpose of the piece.



Figure 10. Pokhvalenskaya A.  
Necklace "Paradise Birds".  
Graduation qualification work.  
2020



Figure 11. Emelyanchuk I. Pendants "Bird".  
Semester work. 2005

The examples provided confirm that the experience gained from creating decorative plastic small forms is applied in the design and manufacture of jewelry by future artists in the field of jewelry art.

Consequently, to achieve a harmonious combination of decorative elements and animalistic images, they should be executed in a unified style. Sketches of animals and birds need to be reinterpreted and transformed into decorative, symbolic representations (Fig. 12).



Figure 12. Naumkina E. Artistic and graphic project of a series of brooches.  
Semester work. 2023

Along with mastering constructive and spatial thinking, future artists acquire methods and gain experience that becomes essential for their direct application in the profession.

In studying the content of the discipline "Decorative Plasticity of Small Forms," students are expected to understand the distinctive features of performing decorative transformations of realistic objects from nature. Familiarization with academic sculpture helps students learn how to create volumetric realistic images based on an analysis of constructive composition. Meanwhile, familiarizing themselves with decorative plasticity of small forms allows them to address the complex task of reconciling realism in representation with the decorative quality of imagery, which is based on methods of transformation and stylization [1].

The creative imagination and capabilities of a jeweler are boundless when it comes to choosing techniques and revealing imagery, ranging from engraving simple ornaments to employing highly sophisticated modern technologies. However, while creating and implementing creative ideas, they rely on knowledge and methods of sculptural construction of three-dimensional images, the specifics and laws of relief creation, and, in the case of exploring animalistic themes, knowledge of plastic anatomy. These qualities become the distinguishing feature of high professionalism in the field of traditional applied arts.

The theme of animalism in the academic sculpture curriculum begins with the study and execution of a bird's relief image on a flat surface. For this purpose, sculptural plasticine is used, which makes it possible to convey the plastic characteristics of the bird's structure and allows one to work out the texture of feathers and small details. The traditionally used materials and equipment for executing sculptural images are also applicable in the manufacture of jewelry constructions and models. Even against the backdrop of widely prevalent modern technologies and the use of artificial intelligence, the value of classical application methods in product manufacturing remains paramount. It is these methods that allow the artist to express their unique sensations and emotional experiences, transmitted through contact with the material.

An important condition for completing the assignment is adherence to the sequence of work stages. First, the general silhouette and structural guidelines are outlined, along which the main volumes of the relief will be built on a board covered with a smooth layer of plasticine. Often, neglecting to define overall proportions at the initial stages leads to the need to return to this step after working on smaller elements because their inconsistency with their place in the overall form becomes apparent. Next, the tilt of the head is determined and proportional relationships between the body, wings, legs and tail feathers are calculated. The height of the relief is then defined, followed by the application of plasticine in accordance with the sequence of planes parallel to the background plane.

A common mistake among students is prematurely transitioning to detailing before adequately building up the relief's height and distributing its planes. This results in a lack of cohesive perception of the bird's volume, overly protruding details, and disrupted interaction between the elements of the image, ultimately undermining the unity of the form's perception. To achieve a holistic impression of the work, the details and secondary elements must interact harmoniously to "preserve" the perception of the primary, dominant shape of the relief image.

The perception of a relief image, achieved by arranging planes parallel to the background plane, can be compared to perceiving round sculpture. To enhance the illusion of depth, the planes closest to the viewer are worked more carefully than those further away [6, p. 63].

Analyzing the practice of students working with relief animalistic images, we can conclude that only by adhering to the sequential execution of each stage in creating such images do they have the opportunity to gain the necessary experience in professional design and production of items on an animalistic theme.



Figure 13. V. Burova.  
Fragment of necklace project.  
Semester work. 2022

The rules of relief construction are often employed in the creation of jewelry, underscoring the critical importance of this topic in educating future artists.

Practically all stages of creating volumetric and relief works in academic sculpture are analogous to the stages of composing works in decorative plasticity of small forms. The basis for working on the artistic image is the academic depiction, which is then stylized by simplifying complex shapes, structuring compositional elements, using the conventionality of plastic language and enhancing decorative qualities.

When creating jewelry, the effect of applying different textures with varying reliefs, learned during classes on decorative plasticity, is frequently utilized. This technique either enhances the perception of the height of the relief image or minimizes it.

As a characteristic example, we can analyze the fragment of a necklace project with an animalistic theme by student V. Burova, where her experience with relief images served as the foundation for designing a piece featuring a bird (Fig. 13).

The construction of the bird's relief image here is highly conventional and the transmission of spatial planes is built upon minimal relations. The bird's silhouette appears as a geometrized form made of white gold, while polished emerald opal is used for the wings and tail.

Jewelry pieces are multifaceted and not limited to flattened relief forms; they can also possess the properties of real sculptural volume. Therefore, the significance of assignments involving mastery of full-round sculpture cannot be overstated.

Creating a three-dimensional animal figure enables aspiring jewelers to explore the realm of animalistic artistry, allowing them to apply this expertise and knowledge in crafting products that incorporate sculptural representations of living creatures.

The practice of developing animalistic compositions, based on the stylization of images using form transformation, serves as the foundation for creative ideas in project implementation.

The stages involved in creating a three-dimensional animal image have their own distinct characteristics. In addition to preliminary sketches, wireframe construction is included. Proportions are established within the frame, and even at this early stage, the movement of the depicted animal is conveyed in the structure [5, p. 152].

Similarly, in the fabrication of a model and the structure of a jewelry item with an animalistic three-dimensional image, the functional requirements are identical to those for producing a sculptural, academic representation.

The sequence of steps in creating a sculptural image is similar to making a preliminary model of a jewelry piece from soft materials like plasticine or wax. The process starts with sketches and exploratory designs aimed at finding the best way to present the subject, whether in sculpture or in creating a jewelry item incorporating three-dimensional, often relief, animal imagery. During the framework stage, proportional relationships are laid down and movements and rotations of the form are conveyed. If the piece is bulky and intricate in its construction, the use of a framework is just as crucial as it would be in academic sculpture. Building volume onto the framework involves conveying motion, proportions and the character of the animal, much like constructing volume on a product model. While in academic modeling from life, movement fully expresses the inherent traits of the depicted animal, in jewelry-making, the movement is subordinate to the unified decorative solution and stylization. The motion of stylized animal and bird depictions seamlessly integrates into the overall composition alongside other elements.

Modeling the overall shape and silhouette when working from life aims to accurately and recognizably capture the key features of a particular animal [3]. In contrast, when creating decorative solutions for products, the modeling of the overall shape and silhouette, beyond recognition, is aligned with the style specified in the product design.

For decorative works, the role of plastic anatomy is equally significant since distortions and inaccuracies in decorative interpretations are unacceptable, as they detract from the artistic value of such pieces. Without detailed elaboration, a three-dimensional image in academic sculpture feels incomplete. Similarly, in jewelry, great emphasis is placed on fine and medium-sized details. The experience gained from applying various textures in academic sculpture becomes particularly valuable when applied to jewelry pieces with animalistic themes.

The primary goal of the course "Academic Sculpture and Plastic Modeling" is for students to master the art of sculpture creation. Through the knowledge acquired about the fundamental principles of academic sculpture, learners gain practical skills to reinforce theoretical understanding. When working on assignments related to animalistic themes in academic sculpture, students develop individual creative project execution techniques and bring their ideas to life in sculptural materials. Additionally, they form an understanding of various types of sculpture [4, p. 7] and explore plastic techniques and expressive means that enable them to authentically and vividly realize their artistic concepts.



Overall, it is important to emphasize that systematic exploration of the animalistic theme in courses on academic sculpture and decorative plasticity of small forms is a prerequisite for shaping future artist-jewelers capable of independent creative activity.

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