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Specifics of training future artists in mstyora miniature painting

Abstract. This article examines the peculiarities of teaching students the art of mstyora lacquer miniature painting in specialized higher education institutions. New components of the content for professional training in mstyora lacquer miniature painting are presented. The results of implementing new components into the curriculum of mstyora decorative (miniature) painting instruction are analyzed, confirming an increase in students' professional competencies. Prospects for further improvement of the content of education in the field of Mstyora lacquer miniature painting have been identified.

Keywords: mstyora decorative painting, mstyora lacquer miniature painting, iconography, stylization, transformation of human figure, teaching methodology, content of education, higher education.

Mstyora lacquer miniature painting is a type of traditional art crafts that emerged in the village of Mstyora, Vladimir region, in the 1920s. This form of art combines decorative qualities, complex technique of multilayered lacquer painting using tempera colors on papier-mâché and profound artistic, compositional, chromatic and aesthetic traditions of regional iconography. Unlike Palekh and Kholuy lacquer miniatures, which emphasize graphic elements and line plasticity, Mstyora painting stands out primarily due to its distinctive color solutions, including gradient background hues and other unique features.

A key factor in creating highly sought-after high-quality works of Mstyora lacquer miniature painting is the artist's ability to skillfully combine painting techniques while maintaining the structural integrity of small-scale images depicting human figures. To achieve this goal, the curriculum of higher education programs in Mstyora lacquer miniature painting includes studying academic painting. Within this module, students learn the principles of color composition, technology of working with primary painting materials and artistic methods used when drawing from life models. However, academic painting courses cannot fully meet the need for knowledge about painting techniques specifically tailored for depiction of human figures directly applicable to creation of Mstyora lacquer miniature paintings.

A significant challenge for students engaged in creating original creative works of Mstyora lacquer miniature painting lies in achieving a high level of skill in rendering and detailing human figures on a small scale, consistent with the artistic-coloristic and aesthetic specifics of this particular genre. Another issue is finding a

balance between realistic representation of the human figure and artistic stylization without losing the uniqueness of the image.

Artistic stylization refers to the process of transforming the form of a painted representation of a real-life object or human figure according to characteristic coloristic features and proportional relationships inherent to the subject being stylized. Such painterly features of compositional solution typical for Mstyora lacquer miniature painting include:

- “Carpet-like” ornamentation in the depiction of clothing elements of human figures;
- predominance of pink, blue and olive shades in coloristic solutions;
- construction of multi-layered realistic landscapes by applying complex glazing techniques.

Within the current framework of curricular content for students of Mstyora miniature painting, the course “Decorative painting” served as a partial solution to the task of studying ways to create miniature pictorial stylizations.

The main principles of decorative painting techniques were elaborated in detail in the works of P.E. Serov [4; 5; 6]. Agreeing with P.E. Serov’s research findings concerning the role of decorative painting in the curriculum for artists practicing traditional applied arts, it can be argued that the direction of acquiring methods for representing living and non-living objects of nature – human figures, animals, plant motifs, etc. – must correspond to the artistic traditions and specifics of each individual art form [8, p. 81]. However, the teaching principles developed by P.E. Serov for students of traditional art crafts did not reflect the essential artistic-technological and compositional painting techniques specific to Mstyora lacquer miniature painting [5]. Previously assigned practical tasks for students-specialists in miniature painting within the educational process were not focused on interpreting Mstyora lacquer miniature painting; instead, they relied on conditionally flat decorative styles, such as iconic, geometric, metric, associative, which are most adapted for students majoring in embroidery or lace-making [6, p. 93]. As a result, students studying Mstyora lacquer miniature painting failed to develop the ability to independently create artistic images based on visual experience and knowledge acquired during work with academic representations [4, p. 152].

Nevertheless, it has been found that Mstyora miniature painting serves as a cornerstone in the training of design and performance mastery in this particular art form. The foundation of Mstyora miniature painting instruction involves sequential study of painting techniques for rendering miniature human figures in static seated positions, standing poses, motion, interaction with household items; multifigure compositions and interactions among multifigured scenes set against backgrounds of historical and Russian national costumes.

Furthermore, Mstyora miniature painting represents a synthesis of theoretical and practical knowledge and skills encompassing painting, drawing, plastic anatomy, as well as regional coloristic, compositional and technological features specific to Mstyora lacquer miniature painting.

Development and testing of the curriculum for Mstyora miniature painting in universities focuses on mastering techniques of Mstyora lacquer miniature painting

and iconography, emphasizing stylistic transformations of the human figure, along with investigating how this content influences the development of professional competencies among students enrolled in higher education programs.

The core of the curriculum for Mstyora miniature painting consists of studying stylization and transformation of the human figure, enabling students not only to acquire technical skills but also to develop artistic thinking, creativity, generalization abilities and comprehension of object representation in two-dimensional conditional plane space. Stylization entails more than just employing practical decorative methods; it also incorporates knowledge of coloristic and plastic characteristics of imagery [1, p. 108].

The content of Mstyora miniature painting instruction is grounded in a combination of historically-artistic knowledge and traditional techniques of tempera painting. A pivotal aspect is comprehending stylization as a creative process involving generalizing and transforming the shape of the human figure in accordance with the specifics of traditional Mstyora lacquer miniature painting, aiming towards the creation of expressive artistic images. Transformation of the human figure is viewed as altering its proportions, contours and details in order to enhance artistic expression and align with regionally-historical artistic traditions.

In university-level Mstyora miniature painting education, emphasis is placed on students' understanding of the historical-cultural context of character costume designs, the characteristics of author-specific tempera painting techniques, analysis of coloristic, compositional and technological approaches in lacquer miniature painting. Instruction proceeds concurrently and interconnectedly alongside studies in academic drawing, academic painting, plastic anatomy, perspective, Mstyora miniature drawing and designing works of Mstyora lacquer miniature painting.

To enhance the effectiveness of instruction, practical assignments have been introduced: interpretation exercises in the technique of Mstyora lacquer miniature painting of academic still-life arrangements featuring portrait sketches of live models, static and dynamic representations of the human figure; stylization tasks focusing on sitting human figures interacting with everyday objects; miniature painting exercises addressing single figures and multiple-figure arrangements dressed in Russian national attire (Figs. 1-4⁵⁰).

Thus, the system of practical assignments is structured following the principle of increasing complexity. Completed educational tasks within the scope of studying Mstyora miniature painting enable students to explore compositional, technological and coloristic features of artistic images in Mstyora lacquer miniature painting and iconography, thereby fostering a conscious creative approach through the use of analysis and synthesis. Creating decorative miniature solutions and experimenting with variable composition allow for reinterpretation of traditional themes, forms, colors and decorative elements, stimulating the development of creative thinking among students.

⁵⁰ Fig. 1-4. Photos from the methodological fund of the Mstyora institute of lacquer miniature painting named after F.A. Modorov – a branch of Russian university of traditional art crafts.



Figs. 1, 2. Examples of performing practical assignment in mstyora miniature painting.
Miniature painting rendition of etudes of a seated human figure

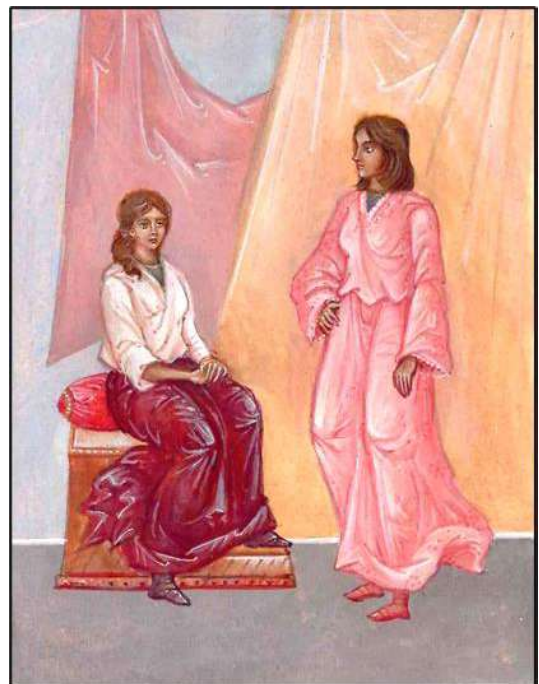


Fig. 3, 4. Examples of performing practical assignment in mstyora miniature painting.
Miniature painting rendition of an etude with two human figures

For comprehensive evaluation of the results of practical assignments performed within the implementation of the Mstyora miniature painting curriculum, expert opinions of instructors and specialists in Mstyora lacquer miniature painting and iconography were consulted. Evaluation criteria included quality of execution, degree of stylization and compositional expressiveness assessed via interval scaling. (Fig. 5).

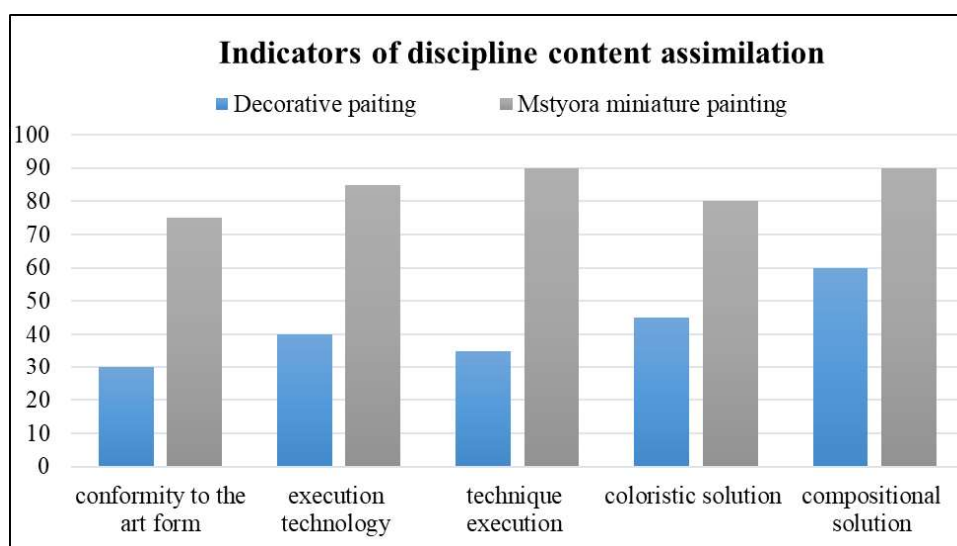


Fig. 5. Chart illustrating indicators of mastering mstyora miniature painting based on assessment criteria for student artwork created within higher education programs

Implementation of the Mstyora miniature painting curriculum demonstrated positive dynamics in mastering both Mstyora lacquer miniature painting and iconography techniques, as well as in the development of professional knowledge, skills and competencies.

Observations of the creative activities of students pursuing a specialization in Mstyora miniature painting revealed changes in stylization and transformation of depicted objects, accompanied by improvements in their professional knowledge, skills and capabilities.

Students successfully learned advanced technological stages of Mstyora lacquer miniature painting, confirmed by the high quality of completed works and effectively utilized stylization and transformation of human figures to create expressive images. Results of interim assessments showed strong motivation among students and successful adoption of the newly designed Mstyora miniature painting curriculum.

Research findings confirmed that introducing the revised curriculum enhances the overall quality of student learning outcomes. Of particular significance was the variability of creative assignments, allowing consideration of individual traits and artistic potential of each learner. Based on these findings, a methodologically sound instructional package for Mstyora miniature painting was developed and successfully integrated into the educational program [9].

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