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Russian animalier art of the New Age. On the problem of genre specifics

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The article examines the peculiarities of Russian animalier art. The work's relevance is that it brings to light the new ontological and morphological status of animalistic art that has to do with the composition of the modern-era world picture from the 18th to the first half of the 20th centuries, which differs in many respects from its mediaeval counterpart. The article is aimed at revealing the peculiarities of animalier art in the context of the era and existing genres, understanding its specific nature as determined by the animal model and the perception of it that implies the evaluation of objective and subjective factors in an image. In addition, the article looks at the peculiarities of an animalier artist's working method as he or she deals with a mobile model not prone to posing, his or her priorities of plot and theme in depicting animals, and the significance of animalier art in general. The article shows that the major initial principle for artists involved in animal depiction was the imitation of nature. This eventually led to the formation of a separate genre, namely animalier art, with a set of distinctive features of its own. The article takes the historical-problematic method as its major approach, implying the articulation of issues specific to the animalistic genre as well as historical-artistic issues, which makes it possible to give a valuation to the artistic aspects of Russian animalier art as a distinctive, original phenomenon in history.

The author notes the significance of the animalistic genre, a genre from the academic environment and one which has had a major role as a school of professional excellence. Despite the length of time that animalier art has been around, it has managed to preserve its “genre memory” and the unity of its morphological characteristics in various types of art. It made it past the 20th Century and is still around today. The material covered in the paper is of value for art history, as it enriches national art with new research findings and little-known facts, for pedagogics, and also in the broader, philosophical sense, as it raises issues of a moral nature (the interrelationship between man and animals).

Keywords: genre; animalier art, animalistic art; animal; science; concept; era, epoch; kind, type; school; character; sculpture; graphic art, graphics; painting, pictorial art; image, figure

1. Introduction

Russian animalier art from the 18th Century to the first half of the 20th Century is a little-researched area, the significance and originality of which is determined by the scale and characteristics of the art – both as a self-contained phenomenon and in the context of the world culture of the modern, and especially contemporary, period.

The animalier theme became widespread as an independent genre in various types of fine art, largely due to the academic system of presenting in an image a human, animals and surrounding objects.

Since genres originate in a certain period of time and reflect a particular era’s spirit, historical style, generally accepted pictorial techniques, etc., animalier art, as a separate, independent phenomenon in history alongside other genres, helps bring to light the artistic world picture, the many sides of a figure’s being. The artist is fully focused on the figure, which looks complete. This was noted by N A Yakovleva, who suggested that the genre “creates a single, yet diverse, image of the area of life which it is intended to master, <...> creates its own component of the artistic image of the world” (Shafranovskaya, 1994:22).

The 17th to 20th Centuries followed the “Russian Middle Ages”, in terms of the history of Russian culture. This later period brought a fundamentally new status to animalier art. On earlier icons, animals were depicted together with saints, e.g. horses appeared with George the Victorious, St Flor and Lavr, Boris and Gleb. Frequently, cows, bulls and sheep are depicted in the Nativity of Christ. Fantastic

images of lions, griffins, leopards and birds can be found in the white stone ornamental carvings of Russian churches in the Vladimir Region (Dmitrievsky Cathedral, the Church of the Intercession on the Nerl in Vladimir, St George Cathedral in Yuriyev-Polsky, the Cathedral of Nativity in Suzdal, all 12th or 13th Century), as well as on the facades of West European gothic cathedrals in France, Germany, and the Czech Republic (14th and 15th Century), etc.

Both in Russian and other cultures, all these images had an applied meaning: they either explained Christian stories or were associated with pagan symbols. They are all united by the common presentation language, which is conditional, decorative and far from the ordinary life-image of an animal.

In the New Age, the 'image of the world' changed due to scientific discoveries. The secular world view became dominant over the religious one, resulting in the emergence of new themes and plots. While European and Russian culture formerly had demonstrated a metaphorical vision of nature, in the form of books (Wagner, 1964, 1969, 1974, 1990) where the animalier image was perceived as a myth or a natural cult, in the period of scientific discoveries, animals were more frequently depicted in their concrete form. Leaving the syncretism of ancient cultures in the past and moving away from the mythical perception of reality, animalier art acquired the function of objective reality cognition (Kagan, 1977; Vasilenko, 1972). This common feature, inherent in both Russian and West European culture, constitutes an important ground for parallelisms and comparisons, which reinforces the relevance of the theme in question.

The concept of the animalistic image, its "character" and structural qualities, which constitute an original and specific domain, is the most important subject of this study. In this regard, it is important to ascertain the genre's boundaries and to select relevant samples. The paper does not examine works that cannot be classified unreservedly as "animalistic", e.g. works of decorative applied art that distort the image of the animal, such as avant-garde and other genres of the 20th Century, where the animal's original characteristic forms have been violated. In some cases, it turns into an ornament, in others it is represented in the form of abstract symbols. An animalier artist conducts a so-called conversation about the animal. He or she takes a close look at the animal to get an in-depth understanding of its appearance and behaviour, where the surrounding objects reveal and supplement the image instead of distorting it. The animal is thus not transformed into an ornament. The objectively portrayed image of an animal that has a similarity to reality explains the fundamental qualities of the animalier art genre.

From the 18th Century on, the image of the animal was incorporated into the existing genres of art and was an indispensable part of the development of

contemporary art, Russian culture being no exception. Having said that, during the 18th to 20th Centuries, animalier art was among the lowest-ranked genres in the genre hierarchy. Even though artists readily placed animals in their works as active participants in the everyday, battle, and landscape scenes or portraits, or even drew them separately, animalistic art could not compare with art depicting man. The main problem was that the genre itself did not claim to be an actual depicter of social reality. In this context, A A Ostroumova-Lebedeva wrote in her diary: “The exhibition judges have resolved not to let in images depicting animals as such, and the rule is that animals should be depicted alongside man and in conjunction with the latter’s activity” (Ostroumova-Lebedeva, 1954, l. 37). The issue was a major concern among cultural figures and animaliers themselves (Vatagin, 1957:68; Kots, 1946:l.359–361; Smagina, 2000:l.56–58, 77). Only in the late 20th Century, in conjunction with the rise in concern about environmental issues, did animalistic art’s significance begin to rise. It is worth noting that the renewed interest in animalier art within Russia reflected global social and cultural processes with Russian scholars and practitioners taking their cue from their foreign colleagues and adapting the latter’s experiences to the local historical traditions, achievements and realities. This makes one return to the issue of the parallelism of synchronous processes taking place on various continents and is a crucial factor in this study’s practical significance.

2. Methods

Most of the approaches to the issues relating to animalier art are governed by the characteristics of the historical development of the genre, its specificity.

The method of art history analysis may be regarded as the most suitable to work with here. It involves looking at the issue in two different planes: the *historical-problematic* one (articulation of issues in the animalistic genre and their resolution in the history of art) and the *historical-artistic* one, which enables a characterisation of the genre features of animalier art and an insight into the structure of the artistic image and the characteristics and originality of those features – especially in comparison to Western animalier art, which in turn makes it possible to see in historical perspective the dynamics of the genre itself. This study on the development of animalier art over the course of three centuries provides a rationale for drawing upon the *historical-cultural* method, which makes it possible to determine the place of the animalistic genre as a specific artistic phenomenon in the history of Russian art against the backdrop of similar global processes.

These approaches help to provide an insight into Russian animalistic art of the New Age as a part of the general problematics of the visual arts as a whole in the context of a certain era.

3. Literature review

Though the theme in question seems quite obvious at first glance, it has not been seriously and substantively studied in literature so far, so the article's relevance is related to the lack of previous studies on the matter. Moreover, at the present stage, when society is reassessing the fundamental principle of man's interaction with nature, the world of animals, the historical-artistic aspect, is taking on added significance. Against this backdrop, the study of issues relating to Russian animalier art is becoming even more timely and relevant.

3.1 Russian experience

There is a wide variety of literature (monographs, essays, features, articles on exhibitions, etc.) in joint works, books, collections, magazines, and catalogues, where the animalistic genre features as a fruitful art, and information on the oeuvre of animalier artists and their major works is provided. The focus here is on publications relevant to the subject under review, namely specific issues in the genre to be considered in historical perspective in chronological order from the time the first publications came out. This approach could provide an integral picture of the genre's existence through the prism of the various authors, so readers can get an idea of the authors' choices of themes to be covered, be it issues relating to the origins of Russian animalier art as a genre or the analysis of the oeuvre of a particular artist.

The *first stage* (the late 18th–19th Centuries) in the history of Russian animalistic art is associated with the emergence of literature of an educational nature. The characteristics of 18th-Century animalier art and its place in the visual arts system were explored by I F Urvanov (Tugendhold, 1926). In his publication, *A Brief Guide to Cognizing Drawing and Painting of a Historical Kind, Based on Contemplation and Experiments. Composed for Students by Artist I. U. (1793)*, the author illustrates the composition of special "kinds" of art in the Russian 18th-Century visual arts. This early work is significant in that it raises specific issues relating to the genre, defines the art of "zveropis" (the older Russian term for animalier painting) as a separate "kind" of painting interacting with other genres, develops relevant themes and plots, and looks into issues relating to it in terms of learning. Therefore, already at this early stage the ability to bring across credibly the appearance of animals and birds was a distinctive trait of animalistic art.

These issues, specific to animalier art, were quite topical at the time when I F Urvanov created his guide for beginner artists.

Having set apart as a separate “kind whatever art dealing with animals, birds, and livestock” (Tugendhold, 1926:36), the author characterised that “kind” and supplied detailed “instructions” on how to depict them, accentuating the features and attributes of different animal and bird species. In addition, he points out that the animalier theme is inherent in ‘battle’ and ‘landscape’ painting. Therefore, an artist should “know how to draw objects of the most famous animals, plants, and flowers” (Tugendhold, 1926:37), as well as from models. These tenets found reflection in 19th-Century literature, for example in the works of the Imperial Academy of Arts. The value of these sources, which contain information on the oeuvre of masters, stages in their development, the way they carried out academic assignments, the organisation of academic exhibitions, etc., also arises from the fact that they stood at the origins of the Russian animalistic genre. Moreover, it is in the academic milieu that many 18th to 19th-Century animaliers developed as artists.

Of significance were articles, still rare back then, on the oeuvre of 18th-Century animaliers, mostly German artists. Thus, V Petrov wrote about J E Ridinger, J F Grooth, and K F Knappe (Petrov, 1864), A N Andreev about the same J F Grooth (Andreev, 1857), and D A Rovinsky about J S Klauber (Gorlov, 1960-68). The authors regarded the artists as ingenious masters who had reached the highest creative peaks and the art of “*zveropis*” as being worthy of being classified as a “special” kind of genre.

Thus, 19th-Century literature continued to cover issues relating to the genre of animalier art, which was viewed as an independent, promising art interacting with other genres, with the oeuvre of animaliers regarded as quite worthy of attention.

In the period that followed, the *late 19th-early 20th Centuries*, due to the birth of art history as a separate discipline, the growing interest in various themes within the visual arts and in the collecting of works of art, the staging of auctions, and the operating of art museums, the genre of animalier art started to receive more attention, with more focus on issues relating to the creative individuality of different masters. It is in that period that books on animaliers, articles in collections, magazines, and dictionaries were published. ‘*Starye Gody*’ (“Olden Years”) magazine (1911) and the book ‘*Venok Mertvym*’ (“A Wreath for the Dead”) (1911) contained writing on the history of art by notable connoisseur of the time N N Wrangel, which provided a detailed characterisation of the oeuvre of the previously mentioned German animal and bird painter Grooth. Wrangel’s articles provide a thorough insight into the “Grooth” collection of paintings. He notes that the “nature imitation” principle became the basis for providing instruction

in animalistic art in the 18th Century. The oeuvre of the animalier sculptors P K Clodt, N I Lieberich, and A L Ober was examined in the artistic-literary magazine 'Vsemirnaya Illyustratsiya' ("World Illustration"), the artistic-historical magazine 'Russkii Khudozhestvennyi Arkhiv' ("Russian Artistic Archive"), the historical-literary magazine 'Russkii Arkhiv' ("Russian Archive"), the art magazine 'Starye Gody' and the first illustrated catalogue for the '19th-Century Russian Animaliers' sculpture exhibition, which came out in 1886.

Some of them contain information on the creative style of artists, and their choice of sculptural material. To researchers, the issue of creative "cuisine" is a significant one, and resolving it is expected to help characterise animalier art in all its integrity and structural complexity.

On the whole, the publications cover a wide range of issues reflecting the interest within the 18th-19th-Century visual arts in understanding nature and animals, triggered by the overall upliftment of Russian culture. These publications provide some insight into the creative work of the era's artists and the workings of the era itself. An objective look at issues relating to the nature of animalistic art and the genre's formation is relevant to this paper. More specifically, there is now a focus on an established group of masters representing the concept of the animal image in various types of art, including such key figures as Grooth (painting) and Clodt (sculpture).

In connection with the new interpretation of the issues related to Russian art, a number of works, including those devoted to animalier art, appeared in the Soviet period. V A Vatagin and I S Efimov, two great masters of the genre, greatly contributed to this. Thanks to their art and their active participation in various exhibitions, the genre became more popular among the masses. The artists' interest in the animalier theme was largely due to the growth in scientific knowledge, particularly animal sciences (e.g. biology was enriched by physiology and zoopsychology). In Russia, the period of the 1850-80s saw an unprecedented emergence of scientific societies, among them the Russian Society for the Acclimatisation of Animals and Plants (1857), the Society for Natural History, Anthropology and Ethnography (1863), and the Society of Naturalists (1880s). These organisations constantly held public readings, obtained educational collections and arranged museums.

The animal appeared as a multi-faceted creature before the eyes of the scientist and the artist. The Moscow Zoo played an important role in animalier artists' understanding of animals. The zoo opened in 1864 and was initially called the Moscow Zoological Park. Until 1917, it was a place for entertainment. In the 1920s, it became a cultural and educational institution. At the same time, the zoo was a research institute engaged in animal biology and was a methodological

centre for other zoos of the country. Various artists had the chance to freely observe and paint animals and birds in the zoo. A number of animalier artists (V Vatagin, V Trofimov, A Komarov, V Smirin, N Kondakov, and others) received serious biological training. Working on the art exhibition of the Darwin Museum in Moscow, illustrating the scientific works of famous biologists of the time and conducting in-depth studies of animals, they were able to understand and assess the outward lives of animals. This was completely new for animalier art. For the first time, one person could be both a biologist and an artist who could bring to bear knowledge of both on to his or her efforts. In connection with this, there was a growing number of articles, reviews, and features on animalistic sculpture and graphics. During the 1920s the critics, and prominent researchers, of Russian and Soviet art A V Bakushinsky, A A Fedorov-Davydov and J A Tugendhold, who, on the pages of the nation's popular magazines (*'Iskusstvo'* ("Art"), *'Pechat' i Revolyutsiya'* ("The Press and the Revolution"), *'Novyi Mir'* ("New World")), gave insight into the period's artistic life, also actively advocated the creation of art capable of connecting, per J A Tugendhold, "profound ideological content with a vibrant artistic form" [1928:162], something that was highlighted in the works of the above masters. These critics were interested in animalistic sculpture and valued it positively – due to the masters' ability to depict the animal's appearance in a plausible and credible manner. Animalier art was now increasingly written about as a separate genre, while research into it started to take on a purposeful, analytic nature. The year 1939 saw the release of the first ever animalier exhibition catalogue. It came out in conjunction with an exhibition, held at the Moscow Zoo, marking its 75th anniversary, along with a publication by B Alekseev on it, published in *'Iskusstvo'* magazine. The article noted the genre's fruitful development in sculpture. In the years that followed (the 1960s–80s), catalogues devoted to animalistic exhibitions became a tradition, which is testimony to the persistent interest among artists and the general public in animalier art as an objectively formed reality.

Those years saw the release of a number of essays on the oeuvre of 19th Century (e.g. A O Orlovsky, P K Clodt, E A Lanceray, P P Sokolov, N S Samokish, A S Stepanov) and 20th-Century masters (the above-mentioned V A Vatagin, I S Efimov, as well as E I Charushin, A G Sotnikov, A M Belashov), which provide an insight into their artistic path. Of particular interest are the publications on P K Clodt (A G Romm (1948), N N Rubtsov (1950)) and on E A Lanceray (I M Schmidt (1954)), which characterise the various aspects of the sculptors' oeuvre and highlight their professionalism. These works, above all, attempt to summarise the achievements of Russian animalistic sculpture of the 19th Century.

In the 1960s and early 1970s, due to changes in the way that animalier art developed, there were a large number of publications focused on social-moral

issues concerning man's careful attitude to the world of living nature. There was a steady increase in the production of publication catalogues covering animalier exhibitions, including personal ones, some of which accentuated the significance of the animalistic genre as an art area capable of awakening man's feeling of love for nature and his responsibility for it. The 1980–90s, marked by heightened interest in the world of living nature, saw a desire for deeper analysis of the legacy of animalier artists of the past. In this regard, it is worth drawing upon the views of V A Tikhonova (*Transcript of the general meeting of the section 'Discussion of the sculptural section of the Russian art exhibition of 1952'*. Tikhonova, 1985), which, importantly, raise the issue of the moral-ethical assessment that implies a responsive and caring attitude towards animals. The same topic was also brought up by V A Vatagin in his 'Reminiscences. The Notes of an Animalier', published in 1980. Thus, the clear articulation of artists' views of the animal world and the art of depicting animals (done in an especially consistent manner by Vatagin) affords an insight into the system of their values and ideals, which turn out to be quite topical in an era marked by the highlighting of global environmental issues. These publications are as important in terms of their analytical approach to the genre's issues as those published in the 1990–2000 period (Evangulova, 1990; Kovrigina, 1998; *Kunstkamera*. Ethnographic papers, 1993; Osipov, 1995; *The 18th Century Russian portrait and problems of "rossika"*, 1986; Savinskaya, 1998; Smagina, 2000; Tikhonov, 2004; Shafranovskaya, 1994).

The historiography, involving a large number of miscellaneous publications on issues relating to the development of 18th to 20th Century animalistic art, attests to a great deal of experience that enables the conceptualisation and study of the specific features of animalier art as a genre phenomenon that evolved over the course of a major historical period and left a legacy of numerous diverse works. However, the lack of a comprehensive analysis of the animalistic genre of the New Age with respect to issues in its genre specificity makes it worthwhile to focus on this, which in turn may help to expand considerably the existing notions of animalier art.

3.2 Foreign experience

Foreign authors have also been interested in animalistic art. Foreign researchers have covered the history of global animalier art from antiquity through to the present day. The diverse literature on the subject can be broken down into four groups. The first group deals with ancient animalier art (prehistoric art, the art of the ancient Near East, and the art of classical antiquity). Authors concerned with the study of this period, like D Aftandilian (2007), G L Campbell (2014), have pointed out the significance of the animalistic art of ancient civilisations and the

role played by animals in society, noting that depictions of animals served as a sort of identification mark in the area of mythology or cult. In our age, foreign and domestic researchers are stressing the need to explore this type of art as immutable classical archetypes. The second group covers the characteristics of animalistic art of the more modern period – the historical eras of the 18th and 19th Centuries – as well as antiquity. These researchers are exploring the artistic criteria for the embodied image worked with during major historical eras, such as classical antiquity and Romanticism (the late 18th to the first half of the 19th Centuries). This literature includes work by J M C Toynbee (1996) and P Beirne (2014). In analysing the animalier art of ancient Rome, Toynbee touches upon the iconographic principles of depicting animals as long-used tools and techniques for highlighting and accentuating the significance of certain characters in society. In analysing the works of the English artist W Hogarth depicting domestic animals, Beirne touches upon the issue of the emblematic and symbolic essence of the animalistic image. The third group of literary sources examines the animalier art of postmodernist movements of the modern world. Take for instance, ‘The Postmodern Animal’ by S Baker (2000). The animal is viewed as a link, a part of the modern world order capable of providing an insight into new topics and ideas. These include the vital issue of ecology, a topic covered extensively by Russian authors. This universal concept of conserving the natural world as necessary for the life of man, has provided a new layer of significance for animalistic art. Finally, the fourth group is devoted to crucial issues of an educational nature, like the professional depiction of animals and birds (for the study of the skeleton, anatomy, plasticity, etc.). The animalistic image in the works of J Weatherly (2007), LJ Ames (1986), J C Amberlyn (2012), H Laidman (2012), and D Webb (2007) is represented as a depictive object that requires studying, model-based depiction skills, and knowledge of specific characteristics of the animal form. Thus, for instance, Ames provides detailed instructions for depicting animals and birds over time. Webb lays out the principles for depicting various animals with watercolours and broad painting techniques. It may be that the last group of works, which are not of a scientific research nature, currently has the more “international” significance – these ideas are being actively integrated into the creative practice of both professional and amateur artists around the world and are shaping the artistic vision, tastes, and moral-ethical mindsets of readers across the globe (including in Russia, where some of these works have been translated into Russian).

On the whole, the analysis of the foreign literature shows the authors’ research priorities – ancient depictions and images of animals from major historical eras. In this regard, this article, which deals with Russian animalier art of the New Age, pursues a similar goal and moves along a similar research path. However, it places greater emphasis on the genre nature of animalier art,

which is important in understanding the very nature of the animalier image, its structure and specifics. The experience of foreign art historians presented in the literature also suggests the need to conduct similar research through the example of European animalier art.

4. Results

This article is aimed at examining the genre peculiarities of animalier art as an original phenomenon that characterises Russian art of the New Age. The analysis of these peculiarities allows a holistic understanding of the animalier genre and the scope of its development. The paper's discursive novelty is characterised both by the choice of a little-researched domain and adoption of an approach to dealing with the subject that focuses on the coverage of Russian animalistic art of the period from the 18th Century to the first half of the 20th century as a new genre phenomenon in art.

This article deals with the issue of *the specificity of the animalistic genre*. Without question, as one of the visual arts, animalier art is a special depictive-plastic phenomenon. Its special features are, above all, reflected *in the way humans perceive the animal* (the objective and subjective factors), *its human attitude toward things* (the system of views of the world of living nature, its spiritualisation), and *the way he cognizes the essence of the animal* (exploring, investigating it).

First of all, it is necessary to discuss *the human perception of animals*. The correlation between the objective (visual-concrete) and subjective (human perception) aspects constitutes an important problem, and an artist needs to probe deeply into this. As an object of portrayal, an animal is in some ways similar to man in behaviour and emotional background. However, an animal is not the same as man, as it is distinguished by zoopsychological features. The complexity of people's perception of the animal is due to these two strands. When an artist, with his or her human emotions and feelings, sets out to depict an animal, as an independent biological creature with complex behaviour and a set of oopsychological qualities, a two-fold situation may arise. On the one hand, the animalier is expected to stick to objective views in assessing the animal so as not to distort its essence (an important principle in animalier art), while, on the other, he or she projects his or her thoughts and views on to the animal. The animalier G N Popandopulo had the following to say in this regard (in a conversation with this author in 1995): "We as artists convey through the animal our human feelings, for we create for people not animals. The animal is our language." Assuming that animals are similar to people in some ways (appearance, anatomy, and behaviour), the human attitude can only be conveyed in a mediated fashion, so as to avoid the

possibility of humanisation (anthropomorphism). By studying it and introducing what is human and subjective without violating the objectiveness of the animal's appearance, the artist can avoid the dryness of blow-by-blow depiction and also avoid dissolving in the 'ocean of human feelings'. It was not by chance that A Tikhanova enquired, "We can easily define all other genres like portrait, still-life, landscape, etc., but we get puzzled and confused when a representative of the animal world is portrayed" (Tikhanova, 1990:141).

Many scholars have been interested in a human's perception of, and attitude to, the world of living nature. In 'The Animal That Therefore I Am' (Derrida, 2009), the French philosopher and animal researcher Jacques Derrida speaks about animals, compares them with humans, and calls them conscious beings. He opposes seeing them as mythical beasts. Speaking about human perception and the intelligence of animals, he uses the example of his own cat, who looks at him and contemplates his 'nakedness'. Derrida asks the following questions: "What does it think?", "Is our intelligence capable of understanding the mystery of animals' inner motivation without attributing human qualities to them?" In this respect, it is possible to outline two problems concerning how an animal sees a human and how a human sees an animal. Derrida uses the following words and phrases to characterise his cat's gaze: 'persistent', 'surprised', 'conscious', 'a seer's look', etc. He transfers these characteristics to other animals sharing one common feature, namely, the lack of awareness of good and evil. In addition, Derrida is greatly interested in how a human sees himself or herself from an animal's position, what he or she thinks of an animal and where the border between humans and animals is. These questions are being investigated by the science disciplines focused on animal behaviour (zoopsychology, ethology). They help to reveal the scope of animals' intelligence and to find out whether animals really think. Erica Fudge, who usually relies on science, believes that in modern times, when animals have been studied to some extent, people are able to reveal and understand a lot of things concerning animals (Fudge, 2006). In understanding the essence of the animalier image, an equally important factor is the human attitude to wild fauna. Animalier artists' principles concerning their art are significant in the universal sense, such as the problem of preserving all living creatures on earth, which in turn leads to the issue of the interconnection between 'nature and man'. In the 20th Century, public sentiment has driven interest in this issue and people's consciousness has changed, no longer looking at nature from a consumer's point of view (as a source for satisfying their own needs), but from the position of studying and understanding the world. In this regard, it must be pointed out that animalier artists viewed flora and fauna from ethical and aesthetic points of view. They spoke of their concerns about the fate of wildlife in various letters and journal pages. Emphasising animals'

great importance in the development of civilisation, V Vatagin, for example, sees the animal world under the sign of the evolutionary and historical tragedy and drama of the organic macrocosm. He points out, "No animal will ever torture or kill its prey in vain. And what an extirpating attitude a human sometimes shows towards animals! What a huge bloody bill could nature present to man for the vast number of wonderful animal species that were predatorily exterminated!" (Vatagin, 1957:7). In a letter to Vatagin, D Gorlov says, "I need to interact with my lovely animals and birds to become a human again. (...) Animals are much nobler, sincerer and less treacherous than man." (Gorlov, 1960-68).

Derrida was concerned about the problem of morality towards animals. He wrote about the exploitation of animals by humans only for the latter's well-being (sacrifices, hunting, scientific experiments, etc.) He believed that from biblical times, when Adam was entrusted to give names to all animals, the historically established leadership of man over animals and the unprecedented scale of animals' subordination led to 'fundamental' suffering and the 'genocide' of many living things, including the disappearance of a large number of animal and bird species. He asks: "How can we characterise a man who subjugates animals, feeling his superiority? Did he not emerge from nature too? What is his social status?" According to Derrida, the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" refers to animals too. It prompts people to think about the importance of their rights and obligations to animals.

Historian Nathanie Wolloch wrote about animal rights in the era of environmental problems in her book 'Subjugated Animals: Animals And Anthropocentrism in Early Modern European Culture' (Wolloch, 2017). Investigating the attitude towards animals in modern Western culture, she marked animals' great role in history, reflected in philosophy, literature and art.

Steve Baker (2000; 2013) and other British scientists have also touched upon this theme. They concur that throughout history murder has been a common form of man's influence on living nature, as an ultimate expression of man's power. In addition, they believe that animals should be valued not only for their aesthetic qualities, but for having the same right to life as do humans. After all, humans and animals coexist on the planet Earth. In this regard, Erica Fudge asks, "Is it ethical to use animals as a means of clothing?" (Fudge, 2002). In another book, 'Pets', she speaks about the relationship between people and pets. She asks: "Does this relationship contain more than just interaction? What do we actually look for in our pets and how can this characterise us?" The main principle put forward by Fudge is that it is our ability to feel compassion that allows us to live with our pets (Fudge, 2014). Nigel Rothfels was inclined to think that human essence is revealed

by a person's attitude towards animals. This is how qualities of high morality are measured (Rothfels, 2002).

In general, the moral and ethical aspect discussed above acquires special importance for an animalier artist and determines the essence and meaning of his or her art. It is impossible not to be greatly interested in the world of animals, feel fondness and admiration for them, their forms and aspects of their life beyond moral principles, because everything is interrelated (Vatagin, 1957). By learning to sense the animal, an animalier artist will be able to create an expressive image of a wildlife model.

Close study of animals will help to reveal their essence, which is the guarantor of an artist's skills. "The more and the deeper the artist knows what he portrays, the better (...). The knowledge of the animal's form, structure and anatomy, its life and habits is a required condition for creating a full-fledged image," wrote Vatagin (1957).

An animalier artist's working method may be similar to that of other genre artists. However, animalier art differs in many respects. A feature common to various masters was the desire to draw a mobile, not posing, model and to stop using taxidermy specimens, i.e. establishing the natural model method as the leading one within the genre of animalier art. The animal is an independent object of portrayal, and an animalier artist is, first of all, concerned about the animal as a mobile being and a meaningful living identity. It is always changeable and is perceived in fleeting poses and expressions of various emotions. In his book 'The Depiction of Animals', Vatagin said: "You can easily draw butterflies or beetles from a collection, beautiful shells, alcohol-impregnated fish, stuffed animals and birds. But all of these would be images of dead animals." (Vatagin, 1957:68).

These aspects, universal for the corresponding artistic sphere around the world, were organically implemented throughout the history of animalier art. This is reflected in the title of the article. A short review of the history of the New Age animalier art will reveal how genre-specific peculiarities were reflected in images.

Proceeding from the basic settings outlined above, the principal achievement of Russian animalier art (in the first half of the 18th Century) was the formation of this fine art area in its genre features, which was closely associated with the emergence of Russian artistic aesthetics in the New Age. In fact, the most important thing was the orientation of fine arts towards the 'imitation of nature' (a feature of secular art), which was later realised in the art of the classicism era. The imitation principle and scientific cognition of the world were reflected as early as the era of Peter the Great in a number of initial animalistic depictions – the "*Kunstkameradrawing*" depicting the exhibits of the *Kunstkamera* and Russian still-lives with images of birds done in the quodlibetic style. The 'imitation of

nature' allows for two interrelated points. The first point is related to the fact that 'imitation' was seen as a study of nature, which was still speculative. The second point has to do with the process of nature interpretation and perception as an important principle of reflection. Artists were able to visually fix the external features of the model (subjective perception) and certain features of abstraction from nature, as well as analysing and generalising from these, thus leading to the formation of the concept of 'image' arranged in accordance with the laws of human perception. This is the natural essence of image formation. By mastering the physical properties of the models through his or her own experience, the artist simultaneously comprehended the laws of model images. The working method consisted firstly of drafts made from the finished samples (full-scale models), the main purpose of which was to convey all the visible signs of the object as accurately as possible. This method formed the basis of the main principle in early animalier art, i.e. imitation of nature. An important point was that training of artists also took place during the painting of natural models, which led to the emergence of a new system, namely, art education (the opening of the Academy of Sciences in 1724 and the Academy of Arts in 1757). This contributed significantly to the development of the secular artist type and to the further development of the genre. It was in that period that the major genres ("kinds", according to Urvanov) of the visual arts (historical, battle, portrait, landscape, and still-life) assumed a definite form in terms of structural-artistic features, and animalier art fit organically into this line-up. The process took place thanks, firstly, to the dynamic activity of foreign artists (Grooth, Knappe, and Klauber) (Fig. 1), who worked in Russia and acquainted Russian society with the new art of "*zveropis*", and, secondly, to the young Academy of Arts, which encouraged differentiation into various "kinds" of art. When the "animals and birds" class was instituted (1765), the study of "*zveropis*" became more purposeful and consistent.

It is worth noting that no other academies in Europe (e.g. England, Germany, France) had this class, with the genre's "specialties" being taught in private and family-owned workshops. The interaction between foreign and Russian masters was determined in large part by the characteristics of the Russian animalier art of that period. Russian artists, relying on the general European depictive system, also reflected the idea of the "morals" of animals which was inherent to the painting of 17th- 18th-Century Dutch, Flemish, and German artists (Figs. 2, 3, 4). Note that, despite overall similarities in terms of theme and style, still-lives by Russian masters neither depicted dead fowl as often, nor did they use as many allegorical depictions. The graceful forms of animals, limned meticulously on all details, including animal fur and bird plumage, and drawing them engaged in their life's activity – this is what Russian artists tended to focus on, after learning from their foreign colleagues the manner of depiction and making those principles the genre's basis.



Fig 1. I. F. Groot Chicken family. 1767, The state Museum-reserve Gatchina



Fig 2. M. de Hondekuter birds in the Park 1680. Государственный Museum, Amsterdam, Netherlands



Fig 3. A. F. Deport. Still life with dog and game 1710. Hermitage, St. Petersburg



Fig 4. Udri Hunting dog on стойке 1725 Hermitage, St. Petersburg

Another feature of this Russian animalier art was that the artists had to pay attention to the behaviour of the animals while trying to ensure the external resemblance of the image to the original model. However, they assessed animals from their own subjective points of view and compared their actions with those of human beings.

In the 20th Century, when the 'hippic genre' (horse art) was especially popular (Daev, 2007:1), the objective characterisation of the horse image was embodied in its complete holistic version in the sculptures of P A Klodt, E Lancere, N Liberija, A Ober (Fig. 5), and the paintings of N E Sverchkov. Their creative work helped resolve some of the genre's general issues. Of particular significance is the model-based principle of work.

The second half of the 19th Century saw the arrival of new guideposts in the genre – those aimed at depicting nature and various phenomena in life. And here the leading character was the horse, the image of which was actively included in landscape, everyday and historical battle compositions and embodied in the graphic, pictorial, and sculptural "portrait" (Fig. 6). The peculiarity of horse art consisted in developing an iconic concept of the horse 'portrait' that showed famous representatives of horse studs (Butovich, 1997:94), mainly Orel breed horses. This 'portrait', characterised by an econographic structure and objective principles of portraying from nature, was aimed at emphasising an animal's pedigree properties including the model's individual qualities, i.e. "portrait" properties, which underlined a crucial facet in the work of the animalier – the ability to capture all the qualities of the object, its distinctive features. Compared with works by German, English, and French animalier-romanticists that were focused on the sublime beauty of wild nature and animals living in it and often depicted domestic animals (dogs or horses) as being steeped in the atmosphere of natural grandeur, in Russian animalier art horses are depicted somewhat prosaically, tending away from romanticism toward as much plausibility as possible. One can thus set apart "*konnozavodskoj*" portrait painting, which was not captured as consistently in Europe, as quite an ambitious phenomenon within the frame of not just the "hippic" genre but animalier art as a whole. Once the horse became a universal model in art, and after it showed the originality of the Russian "hippic" genre, one could speak of its significance, not just in a narrow sense to connoisseurs and aficionados but, in a broader sense, as a typical phenomenon in 19th Century national culture.



Fig 5. P. K. Klodt's Horse at a watering place 1850 Bronze. Timing



Fig 6. Crickets N. E. The horse's head. 1890-e, paper. on the cardboard. pastel. State Museum of horse breeding. Moscow

This may be explained by the fact that in the second half of the 19th century Russian sculpture and painting developed within the framework of Realism and was not influenced much by Romanticism with its cult of the majestic animal, as was the case in the West throughout the 19th century and at the turn of the next century. Even domestic animals, like the dogs of the English artists E H Landseer and A J Elsley and the bulls of the French master J R Brascassat, or the cats of the Dutch artist H Ronner-Knip, are depicted with an obvious tinge of sentimentality and are made to look imposing, to impress the viewer with colourful forms and overall surroundings. This aesthetic had a major effect on the scientific mindsets in Western animalier art, and this may be regarded as the source of the fundamental differences between Russian and foreign research “schools” in the area.

Research into animalier sculpture and painting of the late 19th and early 20th Centuries showed there was a new way of viewing living nature. This new approach consisted of artists striving to reflect the state in which the animals were, their emotional affinity with man, leaving in the past the “hunting” and “hippic” genres, with their narrative orientation and penchant for depicting Russian everyday life, which had determined the development of earlier animalier art.

At the turn of the 19th and 20th Centuries came the issue of the figurative embodiment of the animalistic character in Impressionist sculpture, which gave the basis for masters (e.g. P P Trubetskoi, V N Domogatsky, N A Andreev, A S Golubkina) (Fig. 7) to use a new method, predicated upon assessing the model's plastic qualities, perceiving it aesthetically as an immediate and “pure” reflection of nature. A similar process took place in Western European sculpture in the late 19th and early 20th century (France and Italy). In France, it was represented by Auguste Rodin, who did not specialise in depicting animals, and in Italy by animalier sculptor Rembrandt Bugatti, known to have influenced the oeuvre of V N Domogatsky. Research shows that the novel philosophical idea of construing animals and nature as an integral entity was also inherent to Russian painting at the turn of those centuries, when animals and their local environment were perceived as single animate plastic matter (this refers to the close interaction of animals and the environment). In some paintings, the artists present nature's spectacular conditions with animals portrayed as ornaments of nature and they seem to be pushed back into the painting (N Karazin, V L Muravyev, E Tikhmenev). Other paintings depict the humble motifs of animals in rural nature (V A Serov, A S Stepanov, L V Turzhansky). For example, images of the Russian Borzoi and horses are portrayed against the background of country roads, copses and meadows in paintings that depict ‘hunting’ scenes (A S Stepanov, R F Frenz, P P Sokolov). Animals live in nature and constitute an inseparable part of it. Figuratively speaking, it is nature that ‘spiritualises’ animals (according to a pantheistic world view). Together with ‘plein air’ portrayal, this quality established a certain artistic

and poetic structure of art pieces that can be referred to as 'landscape-animalier' paintings. 'Plastic' images depict a simple and clear world view of Russian nature and animals.



Fig 7. Andreev N. Fox.1903.gypsum. The state Tretyakov gallery (TG), Moscow

The animalier image's significance is first of all determined by understanding the national characteristics of the Russian lifestyle, which is one of the peculiarities of the domestic genre. This tendency remained in the first half of the 20th Century and showed itself in the heyday of the animalistic genre in various visual arts (graphics, sculpture, painting, scientific illustration). Preference shifted to the image of the wild animal, which, placed in a zoo and devoid of its hunting nature and freedom, became the principal model employed by artists. As a consequence of the deepening of humans' perception of the world – and the expansion of their view of the world of nature and their efforts to explore its laws and their ability to make new discoveries in biology – society changed its view of animals and the animalistic genre. An original model of "wild nature" was "reconstructed" in easel sculpture, which, essentially, reflects reality the closest. New vistas opened up in monumental and decorative monumental sculpture and smaller forms found in the natural and everyday environment, leaving behind the traditions of the horse monument and "cabinet sculpture". Sculpture, as an arena for the search for plastic expressiveness, was susceptible to experimentation in easel, monumental, and smaller forms alike and there was a plenitude of artistic embodiment in various materials. In the 20th Century, several generations of animaliers produced this type of art, starting with V Vatagin (Fig. 8) and I Efimov (the 1910s–30s) (Fig. 9), followed (the 1950s–60s) by A Sotnikov, P Kozhin, D

Gorlov (Fig. 10), B Vorob'ev, V Trofimov, I Frich-Har, D Tsaplin, A Belashov, A Tsvetkov, O Malysheva, and others. The artists M Ostrovskaya (Fig. 11), A Marts, S Aser'yants, V Gubina, L Berlin, N Sazykina, V Sokolov, D Voronin, P Khokhlovkin (Fig. 12), I Rukavishnikov, O Ryashentsev, R Sherifzyanov, and others represented the domain in the 1970s–2000s. It is worth noting that as a part of 20th Century sculpture the animalier artists were confirmed in their view of how to depict wild animals, due to the emergence of new ways of thinking about nature and the environment. Animalier artists themselves often spoke of the importance of conserving and taking care of this world, advocating the need to understand the animal world and to gain further insight into the principles of depicting it (masters' artistic-theoretical views). For this reason, easel sculpture, along with graphics, became one of the most sought-after genres in terms of exhibited art; it looked original against the backdrop of the customary depiction of wild and domestic animals in paintings by 19th Century and early 20th Century Western artists. Easel animalistic graphics were also distinguished by their mobility and were being actively incorporated into the artistic process. Employing all the varieties inherent to it, like cursory sketches, multi-frame and landscape drawings, tonal sketches, print versions, etc., it was tangibly different from what had been previously practised. Even illustrated children's books of the time focused on easel painting depicting most precisely a natural animal (Fig. 13). Illustrations in books for preschool children reflected the qualities of original animals and were far from the modifications typical of fairy tale characters. Despite the difference in the objectives of children's and scientific illustration, they were united in one thing – an orientation towards cognition. One was making sense of the world of living nature through vibrant, colourful, fluent, and succinct pictures in children's books while there were line-art drawings alongside detailed pictures of animals, including elaborate illustrations of the environment, in scientific and popular science books. With varying degrees of attractiveness while performing the cognitive, aesthetic, and educational functions (illustrated children's books) or scientific, descriptive and illustrative functions (scientific illustration), together they acted as a sort of methodological template, with an artistic aspect of their own and characterised by the ability and workmanship of artists to create integral image pictures providing an insight into the life activity of animals.

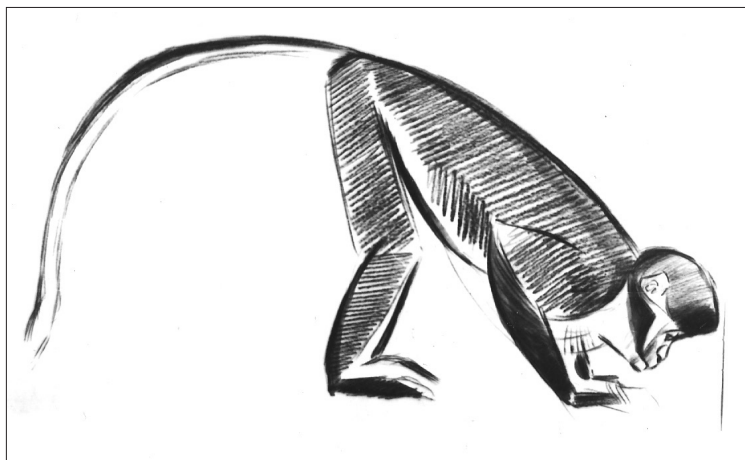


Fig 8. Vatagin V. A. Monkey. 1926. pencil. The state Darwin Museum (GDM), Moscow

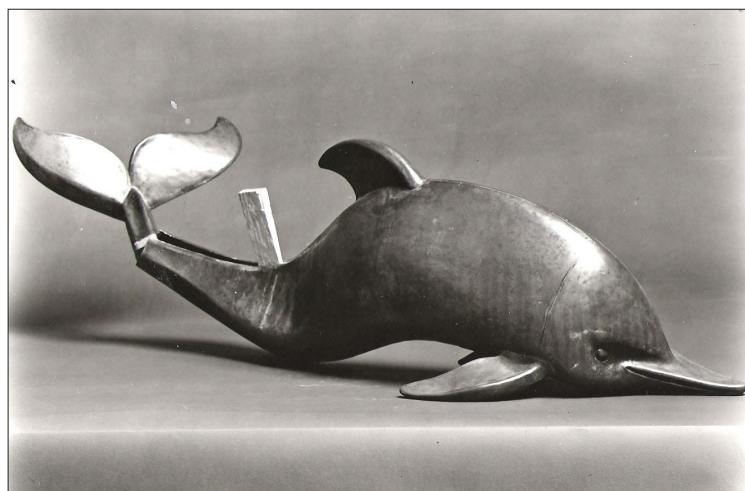


Fig 9. I. S. Efmov Dolphin Wrought copper 1935 Tretyakov gallery (TG), Moscow



Fig 10. D. V. Gorlov. The porcupine-pencil 1950-e. Porcelain , overglaze painting



Fig 11. M. Ostrovskaya Jerboa. Bronze, 1980-e. Tretyakov gallery (TG), Moscow



Fig 12. P. V. Khokhlovkin beetle. Ceramics, 1991. Biological Museum named after Timiryazev. Moscow



Fig 13. V. A. Vatagin the Alphabet in pictures

5. Conclusion

In the system of visual art genres animalier art has been, by and large, on the lowest rungs of the hierarchical ladder, and preference has been given to works of other genres at exhibitions. Nevertheless, in each historical stage animalier art expanded its interests in depicting diverse flora and fauna, it asserted new images, and it demonstrated various genre-specific and national characteristics. This concerns the choice of themes and characters, the style and implementation of these themes and characters, their interaction with nature, etc. The Russian animalier art school of the 20th Century could prove that it is an art branch that is sufficiently profound and no less important than a portrait, a landscape or a thematic painting. The modern-era historical-artistic process in Europe and Russia, in which animalier art operated, was characterised by a degree of genre determinateness and agreement, interaction and synthesis, not upset by the presence of leading genres or by the smoothing out of some of the hierarchical distinctions between genres. The role of animalier art lay in its ability to reproduce as completely as possible the plenitude of the natural world, associated in a broad sense with the world picture. In this view, animalier art, acting in its independent genre capacity as the modality of a new thematic reality, the genre being expressed in various visual arts, played, in a broad world view sense, an unquestionable role as a value factor in the interaction between man and nature, and, in a narrower sense, as time's depictive theme. Against the backdrop of the traditional way of depicting animals in antiquity and in the West, at first Russian animalier art relied on Western templates, but then developed in parallel with other national schools, forming over time a set of traditions of its own, which have maintained their relevance to this day.

Thus, before gaining independence as a genre, animalier art completed a historical journey of development – starting off as “*zveropis*” in the 18th Century and being studied academically in a class set up at the Imperial Academy of Arts through to its state as a genre in the first half of the 20th Century. In searching for a topical artistic image while striving to keep the natural plasticity of animals and birds, animaliers who created in the period from the second half of to the late 20th Century (M Ostrovskaya, A Tsvetkov, O Malysheva, A Marts, D Uspensky, S Aser'yants, S Loik, and many others) drew upon the experience of their forerunners, who were loyal to the idea of imitating nature. The above makes it possible to regard Russian animalistic art as a distinctive structural depictive phenomenon of the period, which in the overall European context may be viewed as a special entity arising from the national characteristics of Russian culture.

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