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THE HISTORY OF ANCIENT GREEK AND ROMAN ART IN RUSSIAN
TREATISES OF THE SECOND HALF OF THE 18TH AND EARLY
19TH CENTURIES

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The age of Catherine II (1762–96) is with some justification said to have been the Golden Age of the Russian Empire: success on the international stage and productive internal policies went hand in hand with a flowering of the arts and sciences. It is thus no surprise that it was during this period that Russian authors started to put down on paper their thoughts on the theory and history of the fine arts.¹ Amongst such writings were Dmitry Alexeevich Golitsyn's unpublished »Exposition of the Use, Glory etc. of the Arts« of 1766,² reports by pensioners of the Academy of Arts of St Petersburg sent to study in Paris and Rome,³ and the notes of travellers or Russian residents in European countries.⁴ The first treatises by Russian authors to devote considerable attention to the history of classical art date from the late 1780s, although these were in effect compilations of foreign works of different dates, supplemented with modest commentaries by the compiler. One characteristic example is »The Concept of Perfect Painting...«⁵ of 1789 by Arkhip Ivanov,⁶ compiled from the treatises by André Félibien (1666)⁷ and Roger de Piles (1708).⁸ Ivanov's text contains a whole chapter entitled »On Antiquity«, setting out views of Greek and Roman art within the context of the art of other contemporary peoples and of the medieval period.⁹

Systematic excavations at Herculaneum from the 1740s and at Pompeii from 1748, the appearance of albums and portfolios of engravings of classical art, and the publication of Johann Joachim Winckelmann's »Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums« in 1764¹⁰ contributed significantly to the fact that in the last quarter of the 18th century and the early 19th century Russian authors devoted a considerable part of their treatises to the history of Greek and Roman art. Even though all these treatises were compilations (by the very nature of its ideology, classicism presupposed the use of works by authoritative predecessors), the choice of quotations and emphases was different in each case, determined by the underlying aim of each individual author.

Classical works had appeared in Russia during the reign of Peter I (1682–1725) but interest in the art of ancient Greece and Rome were nothing more than

part of a general European fashion during the first half of the 18th century. The Emperor's agents purchased ›antiques‹ along with later European copies and Italian works of the 16th and 17th centuries, all of them occupying an equal position within his houses and palaces. It was the arrival on the throne of Catherine II, who sought to appear as an ›enlightened‹ ruler and demonstrate that Russia was a ›civilised‹ country, which brought about a change in attitudes. Now Greek and Roman works of art were perceived not just as individual items of value purely in themselves, but as models to be copied and imitated.

One of the first Russian histories of art, two thirds composed of a survey of the historic development of ancient Greek and Roman art, was not written by a specialist in the arts or a teacher at the Academy, but by a physician. The ›Dissertation on the Influence of Anatomy on Sculpture and Painting‹¹¹ by Ivan Vien¹² was published in 1789, but in 1803 he produced a much improved and expanded version under the title ›A Brief Historical Overview of Sculpture and Painting‹.¹³ Much attention is paid in Vien's works, in both the main text and the commentaries, to a historical survey of classical art. The author sets out his position with regard to both Greek and Roman art. His concept of the relationship between them and the art of other lands and ages, lays out an ›evolution‹ of art and puts forward his vision of the purposes served by art historical writing.

Another treatise containing significant information about the art of antiquity is ›Thoughts on the Free Arts...‹,¹⁴ published in St Petersburg in 1792 by the Conference Secretary (later Vice-President) of the Academy, Pyotr Chekalevsky.¹⁵ This too is a variant on ›Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums‹, but as the work of a specialist, a teacher at the Academy, it was intended to serve a very specific purpose, that of proving Russian art's succession to the art of ancient Greece and Rome.¹⁶

The last work under discussion of those written in Russia at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, when there was an outpouring of treatises on the history of art, is ›An Outline of the Arts...‹¹⁷ by Alexander Pisarev,¹⁸ published in 1808. It has a precise structure and is accompanied by a bibliography of both Russian and foreign publications (an honoured place among the Russian sources being allocated to Vien's ›Brief Historical Overview‹ and Chekalevsky's book). It serves a manifest educational purpose: the author seeks to acquaint future artists with experience of the past and to ›educate through entertainment‹,¹⁹ what is a quite understandable principle in the context of the age of Enlightenment. It sets out the history of drawing and painting from

antiquity to the 18th century, the history of sculpture and a general history of the visual arts.

In essence, the four treatises were Russia's first handbooks to the history of art, the first academic textbooks for students, responding to an evident lack of such works at the time. »Studying [...] for eight years in the imperial school under several foreign teachers, and later myself spending 25 years teaching others in the most important institutions, I noticed that we learn and teach rather by practice than theory, and that therefore we lack the resources to explain our own art«, wrote in 1793 Ivan Urvanov, artist and teacher at the Academy, and author of a practical handbook for artists.²⁰ All three authors – Vien, Chekalevsky and Pisarev – published their works in St Petersburg, then capital of the Russian Empire, and intended them to be used by students at the Imperial Academy of Arts. Founded some fifty years before, by the early 19th century the Academy had already produced a number of leading artists, but it was only in 1802 that it introduced the teaching of such subjects as »the theory of the sensations produced by the fine arts« (i. e. aesthetics), »the theory of the fine arts« and, for older students, »the history of the arts and artists«.²¹

If an author sets out to write what he himself defines as a history of art, moreover one intended for use as a textbook by artists in training, there must be a presumption that he has his own concept, in accordance with which and in order to support which he selects his facts and places his emphasis. By the time the Russian authors mentioned above put pen to paper, they had at their disposal a whole body of texts on the art of antiquity to guide them. Above all, they were acquainted with Johann Joachim Winckelmann's »Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildhauerkunst« (1755) and »Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums« (1764),²² the relevant chapters in the »Encyclopédie« of Diderot and d'Alembert (1751–80),²³ »Gedanken über die Schönheit und über den Geschmack in der Malerey« (1762) by Anton Raphael Mengs,²⁴ and Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's »Laokoon oder Über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie« (1766). There can be no doubt about the popularity of these works and these authors in Russia in the second half of the 18th and first third of the 19th century, but none of them, apart from Mengs, had as yet been translated into Russian. Translations had been made of works less well known today, such as the »Dictionnaire iconologique...«,²⁵ in which articles on the depiction of characters from antiquity included detailed descriptions of surviving works such as the Laocoon, as well as quotations from various classical authors,²⁶ and Mengs' »Trattato della bellezza e del gusto«.²⁷

The »Trattato« or letter in fact runs to some one hundred pages, written in response to a proposal to offer his opinion on paintings in the royal palace in Madrid. Half of it sets out the history of the painting of the ancients, an exposition much influenced by the ideas of Winckelmann and presented as a consistent succession of styles, for each of which the artist gives the names of particular artists and the title of specific Greek works, most of them known from Roman copies or from written sources. European artists are compared with Greek ones, their work is characterised by those same styles.

Russian 18th-century authors took as their sources not only works by modern authors but also those by classical writers: Pausanias' »Description of Greece«, Pliny's »Natural History«, Strabo's »Geography«, Herodotus' »Histories«, Aelian's »Stories from History«, etc. which included descriptions of works of art and tales of artists of antiquity. This historical grounding was supplemented by contemporary archaeological finds and by European studies. The four conceptual works by Vien, Chekalevsky and Pisarev all make use of the same sources and all touch on the history of the fine arts in ancient Greece and Rome. A closer study of the texts reveals some fascinating differences in setting out the material, interpreting and understanding the art of antiquity, and exposes the authors' own ideological positions and individual motivations.

IVAN VIEN: HISTORY OF CLASSICAL ANCIENT ART AS THE HISTORY OF THE MASTERY OF ANATOMY

Vien's concept, defining the construction of both of his treatises, can be roughly characterised as art history as the history of the mastery of anatomy. His »Dissertation« of 1789 is a relatively short text of 86 pages with a vast body of references and commentaries (fig. 1). Dedicated to Ivan Ivanovich Betskoy, director of the Academy of Arts, and opening with an address in which the author sets out the benefit to be gained from his writings, it comprises general thoughts on art, an exposition of the history of sculpture from antiquity to the 18th century with thoughts on the influence of anatomy, a similar history of painting, separate meditations on the benefit of anatomy for art and a conclusion. In structure and themes, Vien's treatise recalls Winckelmann's »Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums« save for its greater emphasis on anatomy. Vien's new version of his ideas published in 1803, the »Brief Historical Overview« – this time dedicated to Alexander I, enthroned in 1801, – was still rich in references

*1 Ivan Vien: Dissertation
on the Influence of Anatomy
on Sculpture and Painting,
explained by proofs drawn
from artistic traditions and
from experience, through
existing works of the most
famed artists of past centu-
ries and modern times, St
Petersburg 1789*

and commentaries and maintained the same structure but was, at 159 pages, nearly twice as long (fig. 2). In the intervening period Vien had considerably expanded his knowledge and read many of the books which had been published since 1789, including Chekalevsky's »Thoughts on the Free Arts«.²⁸

Both of Vien's treatises were published »for the benefit of pupils of the Academy of Arts«,²⁹ i. e. they had an educational purpose, as is confirmed by a quotation from the poem »Message to Russian Pupils of the Free Arts« by the writer Yakov Knyazhnin³⁰ which served as an epigraph to both works and to which the author refers several times in the text to support his arguments:

»Without good education all your works are vain,
All sculpture is but puppetry,
all painting worthy of disdain.«³¹

For the purposes of education, therefore, Vien offered his readers – students at the Academy – the information they needed regarding painting and sculpture. His main ideas were as follows: being endowed with a gift, one must perfect one's skills and work on one's taste in order to select from nature only that which was worthy, genuine and beautiful. In order to create good works one must possess many different kinds of knowledge; at the basis of all was drawing, for which one must »observe precise dimensions, particularly in the outlines of human bodies«, based on the »immutable rules of geometrical proportion of sex and age, and still more on sufficient anatomical knowledge of the human limbs«,³² making clear that both sculptors and painters needed to master anatomy. This assertion of the need for a knowledge of anatomy is the leitmotiv running throughout both works, Vien using the history of art to illustrate his argument: those artists who had made a careful study of anatomy produced superb works of art (the Greeks under Pericles and Alexander), but when anatomy was ignored art went into a decline.

Such an approach determined the view of art in Vien's writings and the very particular method proposed for its study. Artists should have a profound knowledge of natural history, firstly to come closer to nature, secondly because »the rules which derive from it«³³ would permit them to correct nature's innate defects and imperfections. In the wake of Winckelmann other Russian authors also put forward this idea of »correcting nature«, but they stated that this required »taste« and »a sense of beauty«,³⁴ while Vien sought to convince artists that the key requirement was »a profound knowledge of natural history«. ³⁵ He provided a brief historical overview of the arts in which he selected specific works of art that might prove his theoretical tenets. Making use of quotations from Pliny, Plutarch, Strabo and Pausanias,³⁶ basing himself on the writings of 18th-century European authors, above all Winckelmann and Mengs,³⁷ Vien set out a scheme for the development of world art that was in many ways typical of contemporary neoclassical views.

Vien's main source, and his key authority on the history of ancient sculpture (Greek, Egyptian and Etruscan), was Winckelmann's »Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums«, but where this did not deal with a particular question or monument necessary to his conception, he quoted directly from classical

2 *Ivan Vien: A Brief Historical Overview of Sculpture and Painting with Full Demonstration of the Strong Influence of Anatomy in these Two Free Arts, explained by proofs drawn from artistic traditions and experience of them, through existing works of the most famed artists of past centuries and modern times, St Petersburg 1803*

sources. Like other Russian authors, Vien had a low opinion of the sculpture of the Egyptians and other peoples before the ancient Greeks, but he explained his position in his own personal way, although once again taking the relevant arguments from Winckelmann. »Egyptian artists were lacking in perfect anatomical knowledge, for their laws forbade the dissection of the human body.«³⁸ Other reasons, such as »the custom of obeying set rules«, »lack of taste«³⁹ and »the artist's low social status« were also mentioned,⁴⁰ but the main cause for a lack of good sculpture was, Vien made clear, only the very last of the reasons cited by Winckelmann: ignorance of anatomy.⁴¹ This example serves to illustrate the underlying differences between the three authors under discussion. Chekalevsky did not linger on the sculpture of Egypt and other peoples, simply stating, without explanation, that in those cultures sculpture was »in a vestigial

state«;⁴² his main task was to describe Greek art and demonstrate the line of succession to Russian artists. Pisarev referred the reader to Winckelmann for information on the sculpture of the Egyptians, mentioning that the Greeks took Egyptian experience and achievements and perfected them.⁴³

According to Vien, after the Egyptians sculpture was taken up and improved by the Phoenicians, Persians and Etruscans, going on to flower in ancient Greece thanks to a mixture of idol-worship, innate Greek skill and so on. He described Greek sculpture in detail, speaking of individual artists and their works, referring to both classical authors and Winckelmann, and characterising each work according to its anatomical correctness. His history of Greek sculpture is set out in accordance with Winckelmann's four styles.⁴⁴ Vien picked out several names for particular attention, stating that »they carried Greek sculpture to heights such as cannot be attained by modern masters«⁴⁵ (a statement later to be contradicted by Vien himself in his 1803 text). Vien praised the perfection of the anatomy of Greek sculptures: »Filled with the creative spirit, the artist sought to depict nature with the greatest precision in order thereby, like Prometheus, to give life to his work, and this presupposes full anatomical knowledge of the human composition.«⁴⁶ To make this immutable truth even more convincing, Vien proposed taking a closer look at several outstanding monuments of antiquity: »the skeleton in the Florentine gallery«,⁴⁷ revealing superb knowledge of osteology or »the marble Marsyas with his flayed skin«,⁴⁸ in which all the sinews and blood-vessels are visible and which bears witness to the Greeks' great knowledge of myology. Many sculptures, such as the Farnese Hercules and the Laocoon, offered a good depiction of tensed muscles, although he felt that they were somewhat »unnaturally inflated«.⁴⁹ »In all this it is clear that each muscle is given just the right tension to produce the action intended by the artist«; the ancients, he said, obviously saw a knowledge of anatomy as absolutely vital.⁵⁰ Then follows a very brief history of sculpture after the Greeks up to the 18th century, naming artists and their works – the most famous works, of course, being those in which the author demonstrated a good knowledge of anatomy.

Vien set out the history of Greek painting in a similar vein, although it was more difficult for him to judge of its merits: no works survived and the few Roman copies were, in his opinion, of only low quality. In writing of painting, Vien was far more critical of Greek written sources than he had been with regard to sculpture. Indeed, he was far more sceptical about classical authors – particularly their amazing stories about the paintings of Apelles, Zeuxis and

others – than Pisarev or Chekalevsky.⁵¹ Here Vien revealed a lack of faith in his sources and in the genre of ekphrasis as a whole, suggesting moreover that if such stories might ever be true, then only with the works of modern painters such as Rubens. Nonetheless, Vien listed the names and works of Greek painters in detail, setting out the individual features of each and indicating in which genre and technique the painter was most successful. Then follows a short relation of the renewal of painting under Cimabue and of the art of the 15th century when »painting soared and achieved perfection such as ancient painters had never reached«,⁵² before a description of European painting by school. European masters achieved great perfection »but however flattering such superiority is to recent centuries, our pride must admit that we owe that superiority to the ancients; for the most perfect schools of painting of our age were educated through classical monuments and from them alone received all their fame and brilliance.«⁵³ After a call to »look and see!«, several pages described great European works of art which »are good [...] as you yourselves can determine« because »they reveal a good knowledge of anatomy.«⁵⁴

Vien ended his treatise with general thoughts on anatomy and art. Man's mood, he noted, affects the state of his body and must therefore be reflected in the body by the artist. His examples include Laocoon, both the sculpture and the descriptions by Virgil and Petronius (in this influenced by Lessing), and Niobe (influenced by Winckelmann). He paid considerable attention to facial expression and movement, stressing the need to study from life to capture them correctly. Like Winckelmann, Vien lamented that »nature herself is never as beautiful as she should be for a model [...] even the best natural form has individual faults«, and it was therefore very important to copy classical works, even the most ordinary ones, since »they are never at fault in terms of anatomy.«⁵⁵ Referring to Winckelmann and classical authors,⁵⁶ Vien related how »beauty contests«, gymnastic competitions and games were held in Greece, these serving as »a vivid lesson in anatomy: artists could see naked youths wrestling, and in Sparta they could see naked girls dancing«. Thus artists »could see beauty unveiled«, thanks to which they were able to depict human figures with such perfection.⁵⁷ A knowledge of anatomy made it possible to distinguish the unnatural from the natural, the banal from the good, to see even the slightest faults, for if the artist wished to achieve »perfect truth« (»le vrai Simple«)⁵⁸ – a concept expressed by Roger de Piles, and evidence that Vien had read Ivanov's Russian translation of his work – »he should be able to correct the deficiencies of nature herself.«⁵⁹ A painter or sculptor lacking knowledge of anatomy was in

no position even to copy correctly the worthy creations of the ancients, since he would not perceive what was essential, and would not correct what was not; moreover, he could not correctly drape a figure, seeking to use drapery to hide deficiencies, whereas the ancients depicted clothing as if damp, for they did not fear to show nakedness.⁶⁰

Vien demonstrated that without a knowledge of anatomy it was not possible even to restore classical sculpture or painting; it was ignorance of anatomy, for instance, which had led to the distortion of the Apollo Belvedere.⁶¹ Vien was the first person in Russia to raise the question of the restoration of antiquities – neither Chekalevsky nor Pisarev manifested any interest in this problem –, citing both successful and unsuccessful examples, once again within the context of demonstrating the need for artists to study anatomy. He called on artists to follow Phidias, Praxiteles, Michelangelo etc. in sculpture and Apelles, Raphael etc. in painting, since they had achieved success exclusively thanks to their knowledge of anatomy. Moreover, many of them had written theoretical compositions in which they recommended the study of anatomy.⁶² To clinch his argument, Vien wrote: »The use of anatomy and the strength of its influence on sculpture and painting are most convincingly demonstrated« by the fact that all the art academies of Europe, including that in St Petersburg, »have made it an unbending rule to teach it to its pupils«.⁶³ Thus, his text is dedicated to pupils of the Academy, and at the end the author calls on them to »be worthy imitators of Praxiteles and Apelles«, to »illuminate the North with the brilliance of Greece and Rome«⁶⁴ – and thereby to gain immortal fame.⁶⁵

In essence the »Brief Historical Overview« of 1803 has the same basic structure as the »Dissertation« but it is more expansive. One senses the author's knowledge of Chekalevsky's writings, which had appeared three years after his own treatise: the footnotes in the »Brief Historical Overview« contain much more detailed thoughts on Russian artists who had equalled or even surpassed the Greeks and certain European masters in skill and knowledge of anatomy. A large number of Russian artists are mentioned, with the names of their paintings; parallels are even drawn between ancient and Russian painters.⁶⁶ Russian artists and their works are highly praised, as are the policies of the Russian state regarding the development of the arts. A partial explanation for this is probably to be found in the publication's more official status. Aimed at a wider range of readers, it now bore a dedication to Alexander I. The text contains extensive information on anatomy, including references to various foreign treatises, not found in the »Dissertation« of 1789; there are more examples and arguments

confirming the author's views, and more references to the question of costume.⁶⁷ The historical part, setting out the history of sculpture and painting, and the anatomical part in particular are elaborated in much greater detail. Vien mentioned a wider range of authorities than before, among them English writers with whose works he would seem to have become acquainted in the intervening fourteen years. He included far more footnotes, sometimes occupying a whole page with the main text but a single line at the top, and revealed overall greater pretensions to learning and academic merit. Now Vien was more sharply critical of classical sources;⁶⁸ some classical works were re-attributed while others previously admired were reassessed.⁶⁹ On several occasions he even entered into dispute with the most respected European authors;⁷⁰ he even dared to touch on that holy of holies for connoisseurs of the art of antiquity, the Laocoon,⁷¹ and he attacked with particular ferocity Timanthes' »Sacrifice of Iphigenia«.⁷² Now Vien contrasted »unsuccessful« Greek sculptures and paintings with the superb works of Russian artists.⁷³ Thus, although the basic idea behind Vien's second treatise remained the influence of anatomy on sculpture and painting, the concept now served another purpose, that to which Chekalevsky devoted his work: the glorification of the Russian creative genius which flourished thanks to the wise policies of Russian monarchs.

Vien, who had no medical qualification and who made his career solely thanks to the personal protection of Catherine II, may probably have had a hidden agenda when writing this composition. Support for such a thesis is perhaps to be found in the very fact of writing the second treatise, the dedication to Alexander I, the perpetual insistence on the need for artists to have a knowledge of anatomy, the simultaneous praise for Russia's creative genius and the cultural policies of her rulers. After all this the author deplores the lack of a suitable professor of anatomy in so excellent and progressive an educational institution as the Academy of Arts: »It is most lamentable that the St Petersburg Academy of Arts, which should in keeping with its status have a full professor of anatomy, has devoted so little time and effort to this subject; for as far as I know this subject has never yet been taught to its pupils in the fitting manner [...] I hope Count Stroganov will take note of this.«⁷⁴ Such an approach allowed the author to hope that his regrets – expressed apparently in passing, in a footnote on the last page – would be noted by the most important of his readers, i. e. Alexander I, and that the latter would seek to correct this state of affairs. It is possible that Vien had hopes of an appointment to such a post himself, which dictated the structure of the treatise of 1803.

PYOTR CHEKALEVSKY: ANCIENT ART AND THE HISTORY OF
INHERITING TRADITIONS BY RUSSIAN ARTISTS

If the writings of Vien presented the history of art as the history of artists' mastery of anatomy, Chekalevsky's treatise presented it as the history of how Russian artists followed the traditions of the ancient Greeks (fig. 3). It is a single text, with no divisions into chapters or sections, occupying 231 printed pages. At the very start the author writes that »in my reading of various foreign compositions I noted several opinions for my own use: and since some of those thoughts relative to the fine arts might be useful to our young artists, this prompted me to publish a collection of them«. ⁷⁵ There are, however, no footnotes or commentaries, not even simple references to any foreign author. Despite the lack of visible divisions, it is nonetheless composed of several successive blocks of text: general thoughts on art and the question of its origins, followed by sections on sculpture, painting and architecture. Each of the latter starts with suggestions or assumptions regarding the origins of the particular art form, continues with a detailed history, mainly dealing with Greece and Rome, following that with several pages on art of the Renaissance and of the modern age, concluding with how Russian artists were in essence directly following the traditions of the Greeks. It is this last chapter which is the key individual feature of Chekalevsky's text. It opens with a justification for the existence of the fine arts and an exposition of its tasks and aims, ⁷⁶ followed by thoughts on the origin of the arts with a critical look at relevant information, and a general history of art. Such are the main tenets: man has an inherent desire to adorn his surroundings and therefore art appeared simultaneously amongst all peoples, but it developed unevenly.

The Greeks even in antiquity unjustly claimed for themselves the invention of all the arts, although other peoples were flourishing when they were still absolute barbarians: the Chaldeans laid the basis for drawing, the Egyptians for architecture. Although the Greeks borrowed the arts from other peoples, they quickly took them to perfection, and therefore Greece can be respected as the fatherland of the arts. Chekalevsky explained the Greeks' superiority in the arts as a successful combination of circumstances: good climate, political system, ⁷⁷ manner of thought, respect for artists (artists enjoyed high status and were even given official posts ⁷⁸), independence of judgement (fame did not depend on the taste of a single person but was determined by a gathering of the people), the artist's financial independence (he could work for the sake of art

3 *Pyotr Chekalevsky:*
Thoughts on the Free Arts
with a Description of some
Works by Russian Artists,
St Petersburg 1792

and did not have to earn his daily bread⁷⁹), perfection of the object chosen (the Greeks were a beautiful people and beauty was considered as a virtue, and those of particular beauty were respected and rewarded), respect for the role of art in everyday life (it was used to glorify the gods, heroes and patriots; while great leaders lived as ordinary people, towns competed in their desire to be the site of a celebrated monument). All this was lost when the Greek people declined into slavery. The arts could not be reborn in Rome, for even though the Romans brought back Greek works of art and Greek artists, they did nothing to develop the arts, expending their efforts on a struggle for power.⁸⁰ Augustus sought to revive the arts but his state had none of the necessary »calm«.⁸¹ Rulers com-

missioned works merely on a whim or as »spectacles« for the indulgence of the common people, so that the fine arts were distanced from their true subject, and their defining rules were forgotten or ignored, with the result that they ceased to be the object of respect for centuries and »the arts came to be used for shameful purposes«. ⁸² Masters had a good command of »the mechanical aspect of the arts« but had no taste or intelligence. ⁸³ The revival of the arts, said Chekalevsky, came in Italy in the 16th century, facilitated by a combination of wealth, the writings of the ancients and the remains of classical architecture and sculpture which aroused curiosity and a desire to imitate. Artists learned through imitation and started to develop taste. Those who succeeded gained fame and this aroused a desire for similar success in others. In this way the arts spread throughout Italy and northern Europe, and since states enjoyed that very »calm« which contributes to the development of the arts, those arts continued to the present in a flourishing state. ⁸⁴

While taking as his main source, like Vien, Winckelmann's »Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums«, Chekalevsky selected only those facts necessary to him and his particular outlook, setting the information out in a different order to Vien, and placing a very different emphasis. If Vien's central theme was anatomy, Chekalevsky returned again and again to the link between the arts and the system of government, using this quite deliberately as a prelude to praise for the state of affairs in Russia (a subject taken up by Vien only in his second treatise).

According to Chekalevsky, the Greeks saw the arts as a convenient way of correcting morals; the arts were important and money was not spared on them; rules were laid down regarding good taste and its defence against excess. Gradually the heads of state separated their own interests from those of society and became accustomed to luxury, after which the arts served only frivolous purposes; in the waning years of ancient Greece, »the artist served grandees as does a chef«. ⁸⁵ None enjoyed noble thoughts since there were no works of art which might inculcate such thoughts. Such was the situation in Greece and Egypt when they were taken by Rome and such was the situation in Rome itself. In modern times, while the arts were respected, it was only for their fine craftsmanship, not for their content; there was no sense of the importance and practical benefit of the arts, and there was no demand for the artist to depict useful subjects, only that he produces skilled work. In Russia, however, during the second half of the 18th century – i. e. the time at which Chekalevsky was writing – the arts surpassed those of antiquity, for learning had now spread

throughout, the circumstances were conducive to a flourishing of the arts, and the future depended solely on the country's government. In order that the arts serve not only the purpose of luxury and entertainment, artists should be supported financially and morally, they should be made useful to society, and this was the very policy being followed by the sovereign and by the Academy of Arts.⁸⁶ In the Academy, the teaching of art was combined with a general education intended to instil in students a striving for virtue and morality which would in turn provide them with the true subject of the fine arts; no such educational institution, with such intentions, was to be found anywhere else in the world. Moreover, asserted Chekalevsky, the Empress Catherine II »pours forth her generosity on artists«,⁸⁷ as in the most beneficial times in antiquity.

The general tenet of the treatise is clear: the arts appeared amongst all peoples simultaneously, were taken to true heights by the ancient Greeks, flourished, then declined over a long and difficult period, to be revived and to reach new heights in present-day Russia where the situation was in effect as in ancient Greece itself. Vien expressed no such ideas, but they recur throughout Chekalevsky's text.

According to Chekalevsky, sculpture appeared before painting, for artists started with the making of »likenesses in clay«. ⁸⁸ The purpose of sculpture was to commemorate great men and models of the virtues (his example being Falconet's monument to Peter the Great, the Bronze Horseman, unveiled in St Petersburg in 1782). Chekalevsky particularly noted sculpture's three-dimensional aspect,⁸⁹ citing the Apollo Belvedere as an example of a model sculpture, his description lifted entirely from Winckelmann's »Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums«. ⁹⁰ In defining and characterising styles, Chekalevsky used examples that repeated almost word for word Winckelmann's writings on the subject.⁹¹ Rome had had no interest in art, living in rural simplicity, but then came a general obsession with Greek art, and everything came to be adorned with sculptures in imitation of the Greeks. The age of Augustus was the best for Roman sculpture, but even then the Romans could not surpass the Greeks (cf. Pliny and Virgil). Roman sculptures reveal the majesty of a people which imagined itself to be the ruler of the world, which was not found in Greek art; Roman figures wore robes according to their status, but lacked »naturalness«, while »visible signs of the passions should be indicated not only in the movement of the face but in the positioning of even the smallest muscles«. ⁹² Passages such as this reveal that Chekalevsky was familiar with Vien's »Dissertation«. ⁹³ The Greeks were accustomed to depicting the human state, the full range of

human emotions, and were uniquely able to demonstrate faithfulness, strength and delicacy of expression. Here Chekalevsky's example is the Laocoon, the description once again taken word for word from Winckelmann.⁹⁴ Sculpture was not invented by the Greeks – the story of Dibutades was but a legend –, although it was they who perfected it (while Chekalevsky also rejected the authority of classical sources at times, he was far less categorical in his criticism than Vien). Even statues with drapery reveal the beauty of the nude (for the draperies seem to have been damped). In Rome sculpture was in decline until Leo X, under whom it was reborn. Nonetheless, the Farnese Hercules, the Laocoon, the Niobids and the Dying Gaul are better than the sculptures of Michelangelo, although »modern sculpture surpasses ancient as regards the depiction of some animals«. ⁹⁵ Having set out the history of sculpture from its appearance to modern times, lingering in some detail on the history of sculpture in ancient Greece and Rome, Chekalevsky brought his readers to his central idea: »In speaking of ancient statues it should be mentioned that Russia today is justly famed for her sculptural works.« ⁹⁶ Listing and praising the most notable works by Russian sculptors, ⁹⁷ in different materials and techniques, Chekalevsky asserted that there was little in which Russian masters were inferior to the Greeks, bringing his history of sculpture to an end on this joyful note.

The history of painting occupies the next 54 pages.⁹⁸ If Chekalevsky allowed himself to write in the first person in setting out the history of sculpture, referring only a few times, for solidarity's sake, to Winckelmann, the recognised authority, in his history of painting he preferred to refer to classical authors, thus shifting the burden of responsibility from his own shoulders. Painting would also seem to have appeared among the Egyptians but once again it was the Greeks who brought it to perfection (cf. Plato); from Greece, painting came to Rome, but it produced no great masters and fell into decline. Painting was reborn under the Popes Julius II and Leo X and is therefore divided into ancient (Greek and Roman) and modern (the various »schools« being identical for all 18th-century treatises). It would be audacious, wrote Chekalevsky, to compare ancient and modern painting: of Greek painting only Roman copies on the walls of houses survived, while ancient writings make clear that these were far from the glory of Apelles and his contemporaries.⁹⁹ Clearly Greek painting was of that same beauty which one regards with such amazement in Greek sculptures. From statues one can judge the Greeks' refined drawing, but the colours have faded and one cannot know if the Greeks surpassed the greatest masters of the Lombard school in colouring. It cannot be known whether the

Aldobrandini Wedding is the work of a second-rate or an outstanding artist; it can only be said that he was daring and that his mastery of the brush matched that of Raphael, Rubens and Veronese. Pliny asserted that the Greeks and Romans were skilled in creating different hues, but one cannot be sure of this and therefore one can but agree with them.¹⁰⁰ In a similar situation Vien, by contrast, would have concluded that the lack of certainty means one cannot agree with them. Ancient authors mentioned the qualities in which each artist excelled, and these qualities are repeated by Chekalevsky.¹⁰¹ In accordance with Pliny, Chekalevsky wrote of the different »stages« of Greek painting: »At the time of the Trojan War the Greeks had not yet discovered coloured painting. 1 stage – the oldest paintings, not the most refined – before Polygnotos; 2 – painters who gained fame during the time when the arts flourished most, from the end of the Peloponnesian War to the death of Alexander the Great; 3 – painters famed for their compositions showing small objects and for small paintings; 4 – those who painted walls al fresco, although not one of these became famous; 5 – the most famed painters in the particular kind of painting known as en caustique; 6 – female painters«. ¹⁰² It should be noted that they are not mentioned by the other authors under discussion. No such classification is to be found in the writings of Vien or Pisarev.

All artists studied in one of the four main schools of painting first defined by Winckelmann: Corinth, Athens, Sicyon and Rhodes. Chekalevsky then described the »kinds of painting« which the Greeks practised, matching the standard classification: history, portrait, landscape, decorative, arabesque, flowers, animals, miniature. In the 13th century Cimabue revived the art of painting, and then the technique of oil painting – unknown to the Greeks – was invented. Raphael brought painting to perfection, while an abundance of talented masters and academies etc. appeared in Italy and other lands.¹⁰³ Then comes the standard listing of the main schools of painting with a brief characterisation of their features and leading artists. Sculpture can surpass »naturalness«, since that is susceptible to mere chance, while painting can gather and bring together, like a bee gathering nectar from the flowers, all that is perfect in nature.¹⁰⁴ But unlike Russian sculptors, no contemporary painter has yet matched the perfection of the ancients: they have achieved perfection in parts but not overall (with a detailed description of which master excels in which area). Chekalevsky completes his history of painting with yet another call to Russian artists, whom Empress Catherine has permitted to copy works in the Hermitage, and whom she has thus provided with the opportunity to refine

their taste and imitate the ancients. He lists the names and works of Russian painters¹⁰⁵ worthy of comparison with the Greeks.

The history of architecture follows the same principles as those of sculpture and painting and brings the treatise to an end.¹⁰⁶ There is no general conclusion, simply another reference to the benefits and glory of the Academy.¹⁰⁷

The purpose of Chekalevsky's treatise was to demonstrate the direct link between the ancients and his contemporary Russian artists, who had »literally taken art from the hands of Phidias and Apelles«,¹⁰⁸ and – through praise of the art of antiquity – to glorify Russian art. By relating the history of art from antiquity through to the 18th century, he demonstrated that Russian art represented the peak of the evolutionary cycle and, since it is impossible for the arts to flourish without good government, praised the rulers of the Russian land.

ALEXANDER PISAREV: ANCIENT ART AS A COLLECTION OF USEFUL EXPERIENCE

Pisarev's treatise is less conceptual than the writings of his predecessors, his main task being to convey to the reader all the experience and knowledge of the fine arts accumulated over the generations (fig. 4).¹⁰⁹ The author had read earlier writings, both Russian and European, taking into account their merits and defects. The effect of this is seen above all in the structure of the text. Unlike the earlier Russian writings, »An Outline of the Arts« is carefully constructed, with divisions and subdivisions and detailed headings. It is precisely divided into parts, each part into chapters. Part I »On drawing and painting« includes information taken from the French text of a certain David Graver, and from the »Encyclopédie«. Part II »On sculpture« is selected partly from the »Encyclopédie« and partly from the writings of the »celebrated« Winckelmann; Part III »On the art of engraving« is »selected from the French Encyclopédie« and Part IV »On architecture« is »selected from various texts on this subject«. Each part starts by illuminating the question of the origin of the art form, continuing with its history and ending with recommendations to those starting out, and with a description of some of »the most famous monuments of antiquity«. Moreover, the work includes »excerpts on the arts«: »On the main parts of painting« (from the Encyclopédie); »Thoughts on painters« (according to the scale set out by Roger de Piles¹¹⁰); a separate »Historical survey of the arts« written by Pisarev and »read by him in the St Petersburg Free Society

4 Alexander Pisarev: An Outline of the Arts or Rules in Painting, Sculpture, Engraving and Architecture, with the addition of different excerpts relevant to the arts chosen from the best writers, St Petersburg 1808

for Lovers of Science, Literature and the Arts in 1803«: »On the arts« (»from the writings of A. R. Mengs«); »Letters on the depiction of rural views« (the writings of one A. Kepen); thoughts »On the effect of government on works of art« (according to the author, »from a foreign journal«); »A mixture, selected from the writings of the best artists« (dominated largely by the statements of Winckelmann, Mengs and Leonardo da Vinci); »Anecdotes about famous artists« (in the spirit of the Roman »Ποίχίτιλη ἱστορία« borrowed from Vasari); two bibliographies (no such thing was to be found in earlier Russian writings): »On books on the arts written in and translated into Russian« and »On foreign

books on the arts«, intended to draw the reader's attention to those publications which, in the author's opinion, »might be of most use to artists starting out on their career«.

At the start of his book, Pisarev chose as an epigraph a quotation from the Statutes of the Imperial Academy of Arts: »To seek to give children a taste for study [...] to awake in them a desire to draw and to read books«.¹¹¹ The author explained to the reader: »The desire to be of use to young Russian artists forced me to gather certain rules and explanations regarding the arts, painting, sculpture, engraving and architecture, from the best writers on these arts, with the addition of some of my own commentaries.«¹¹² Thus the author immediately declared the key features of his text to be »usefulness« not only »for young people training themselves in the free arts, but also for connoisseurs«,¹¹³ and compilation, a feature that also characterised earlier Russian texts. In this case the book serves as an intermediary for the transmission of accumulated experience. The treatise is a combination of the author's own thoughts with a multiplicity of borrowed material that defines the main intellectual and theoretical content. In accordance with the traditions of European writings of previous centuries, the book unites theory with practical advice to artists.

In Part I »On drawing and painting« the material is set out as a series of questions and answers, such a format presupposing the existence of »correct« answers, representing »true« knowledge: – Who invented drawing? – The invention of drawing is attributed to Dibutades, daughter of a potter from the town of Sicyon, which is in the Peloponnese in Greece and such like. As regards the invention of drawing Pisarev remains true to »outdated« views – Vien and Chekalevsky had both rejected the legend related by Pliny. This first part presents information of all kinds, including biographical, about the famous Greek painters, taken from written classical sources, such as the various legends about Protogenes and Apelles. It contains much fragmentary information about the history of art in Greece and Rome, but it does not offer a history of art in antiquity as such.¹¹⁴ Things are slightly different in the section on sculpture probably because in Winckelmann's writings the history of classical sculpture is far more detailed than his history of painting. The section consists of chapters on »the beginnings of sculpture«, »materials for sculpture«, »the production of works of sculpture«, »the main parts of the body observed by the sculptor«, »various styles in sculpture«, »proportions« and »the ancient in the arts«. Then follow descriptions of the most outstanding ancient Greek statues, composed of quotations from Winckelmann, as the author himself states in the intro-

duction to the publication and in a clear statement at this point: »Artists and connoisseurs borrow their information on these subjects from the writings of Winckelmann; and shall be satisfied if we too cite him in his superb descriptions of ancient images.«¹¹⁵ The selection of outstanding Greek sculptures is that standard throughout the 18th century in Russia and abroad and in the treatises under discussion: »a description of the Laocoon«,¹¹⁶ »a description of the Farnese Hercules«,¹¹⁷ »a description of the Apollo Belvedere«,¹¹⁸ »a description of the Meleager incorrectly called Antony«,¹¹⁹ »a description of the Medici Venus«,¹²⁰ »a description of the imaginary dying Gaul«. ¹²¹ Moreover, the treatise is equipped with engraved depictions of the sculptures – none of the earlier Russian treatises had been illustrated, even though Winckelmann's »Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums« included engravings and there were whole albums of prints after classical sculptures and paintings available. Some of them were listed in Pisarev's bibliography of recommended reading. As regards the origins of sculpture, Pisarev set out ideas already known from Chekalevsky: that sculpture appeared before painting but that it is hard to suggest exactly where it emerged; that the imitation of nature was the first step in both sculpture and drawing. In speaking of the different peoples who practised sculpture, Pisarev referred to quite varied sources: the Jews had sculptures, for the Bible relates that Rachel stole the idols from her father's house; the Egyptians also had sculptures, as mentioned by Winckelmann in his »Geschichte der Kunst«; the Phoenicians had sculptures, evidence is found in the »Iliad«; sculpture was known to the Persians, the Etruscans (cf. Winckelmann), and the Greeks, who brought it to perfection and then passed it on to the Romans and to the rest of Europe; even the Slavs had sculptures, for they made idols from stone and metal (this possibly borrowed from Chekalevsky). To the modern reader the equal respect given to Winckelmann, the Bible and the Iliad as reliable sources of information seems somewhat surprising.

The chapter on the materials used in sculpture is largely a paraphrase of the relevant chapter on the history of the art of antiquity in the 34th book of Pliny the Elder. The chapter on making sculptures presupposes the existence of several bozzetti (from small to life size) before production of the actual work and would seem to be based on the practical recommendations found in artists' handbooks mentioned in the list of recommended reading. The chapter on the parts of the body deals with poses, proportions of the human body, the manner of depicting its individual features, the problems involved in the depiction of drapery, all »on the basis of the rules taken from the Greeks«. ¹²²

The next chapter sets out the four styles, with examples, that accord with the four styles identified by Winckelmann. The chapter on dimensions sets out the proportional relationship between the different parts of the body taking the standard 18th-century set of statues as its guide: Apollo, Laocoon, Meleager, Farnese Hercules and Medici Venus. »On the ancient in the arts« raises the question of the perfection of Greek statues, in which there are »four parts inherent in art«: beauty of form, perfection of drawing, »majesty and nobility in appearance and features«, »strong and correct expression of the passions, subordinated always to beauty«.¹²³ »The Greeks adhere not to nature but to the true mental image of beauty, rejecting anything purely personal or chance«,¹²⁴ picking out the main element of each depiction: for Jupiter it is his majesty, for Hercules his strength, and so on. Whoever wishes to succeed in these four parts should imitate the Greeks and thus educate their own taste. Of all the modern schools of painting and sculpture the Roman school surpasses all others, purely because they »had more opportunity and freedom to study those superb images of ancient Greece«,¹²⁵ and only thanks to this did Raphael and Michelangelo achieve their greatness. The works of the Greeks differ in terms of elegance and expression but are always marked by taste; the highest beauty is characterised by the beauty of each and every detail. No benefit is to be derived from simple copying, for one must also comprehend the works with one's mind and one's senses: »Whoever is not consumed by inexpressible delight after looking at the ancients should throw down his chisel.«¹²⁶ Pisarev quite logically follows these words with a description of statues borrowed from Winckelmann. Parts III and IV are written in the same spirit.

Then follow »Excerpts on the arts«, of which the most interesting part, in the context of this article, is the second chapter »A historical survey of the arts«.¹²⁷ Half of each page is taken up with references and commentaries, not found in the text before this. All the arts are divided into three types. The source of the arts lies deep in antiquity (cf. Mengs). They appeared for purely practical purposes: architecture – to protect people against the weather, modelling and sculpture – to satisfy a need for vessels, drawing – because one must know what an object is to be like before making it. Egypt was the cradle of the arts (cf. Mengs and Diodorus of Sicily), but the Greeks brought all the arts to perfection. Thereafter the history of Greek art and its four styles are exposed and those same artists and works with a description of the arts under the Romans (cf. Winckelmann). The rebirth of the arts in Italy in the 15th century is described (cf. Mengs) and the main modern European schools set out. Then follows a brief history of the

arts amongst the Slav peoples (probably influenced by Chekalevsky), in which all leads to the assertion that Russian masters are the direct heirs of the Greeks. A footnote lists in detail the names of individual artists and their works, with the statement that »their works are in essence true impressions of the works of the ancients – those models of beauty and perfection.«¹²⁸

The third chapter of these excerpts presents another history of classical art founded on the writings of Mengs (probably his »Letter«).¹²⁹ The main tenets in this chapter largely coincide with those set out in the other Russian treatises: the arts were invented simultaneously in all lands, first drawing and then painting and sculpture, but they were preceded by philosophy and learning, for »the ancients travelled a very different path to that which we now follow; reason was their guide, not habit or mere caprice.«¹³⁰ Before Alexander the arts »were in a state of perfection«,¹³¹ but after his death the decline set in and the same thing was to happen after the death of Raphael and Michelangelo. The Romans imitated the Greeks and their best works were created under Trajan and Hadrian, and the decline came because there were too many artists, making art something common and everyday, such that people ceased to respect it and, moreover, the state was perpetually at war. The second rebirth of the arts in the 15th century was also due to the Greeks. The ages rich in works of art were ages of majesty and morality. The ancients spared no expense in rewarding artists, since they understood that the arts promote virtue. Ancient artists always selected those objects which elevate the soul and turn the viewer away from the path of sin (according to Winckelmann's »Versuch einer Allegorie« of 1766, the Greeks depicted only virtues). Works of art should inculcate morality and if they do not then they are useless (from Milizia's »Dell'arte di vedere nelle belle arti del disegno«¹³²). In order that they perform this function, one must educate the heart and mind and perfect one's taste. Moreover, the artist should be able to write eloquently about his art (according to Pliny, Apelles wrote three theoretical works) and thus lay out the shortest path for his followers to achieve perfection.¹³³

The fifth part of Pisarev's book, »On the effect of government on works of art«, is that which differs most from the writings of other Russian authors, although it was clearly influenced in part by Chekalevsky's ideas. A monarchy, declared Pisarev, is more beneficial for the arts than a republic – history has proved this: under a monarchy, even if the monarch himself is at war, artists can continue their work, whereas in a republic every member of society is obliged to fight – a reflection of that »calm« necessary for the development

of the arts was described in the earlier Russian treatises. Under a monarchy, »magnificence« gives birth to the arts, it supports and rewards them, while in a republic everyone is envious of others and therefore artists are perpetually being expelled. Good deeds result in the best kind of fame for a monarch, but they are soon forgotten, unless an artist captures and commemorates them.¹³⁴

The next part is a mixture of quotations from Winckelmann, Leonardo, Mengs, Lessing and Diderot, all of whom are summoned, as recognised authorities, to confirm what has been said in the previous chapters.¹³⁵ Then follow »anecdotes«,¹³⁶ a selection of amusing and instructive short stories even including several anecdotes about Russian artists. As regards ancient history, these are the usual tales repeated throughout the 18th century, some of which were found in the footnotes to Vien's publications.¹³⁷ Anecdotes about artists of the 13th to 18th centuries were taken partly from Vasari and partly from other anthologies of stories about the artists. Several of them are listed amongst the recommended reading. Once again Pisarev reveals himself to be markedly conservative, for the classical anecdotes had been rejected by his predecessors, in categorical form by Vien and more temperately by Chekalevsky.

The bibliographical section is surely one of the most interesting parts of Pisarev's book, helping us understand the author's attitude to individual writers and to specific questions or writings. Part VIII, publications in Russian, consists of two chapters: »true or original« (books by Russian authors) and »translated books«. Part IX consists of foreign books, with separate chapters dedicated to French, Italian, English, German and Latin writings. Each book is cited with publication details (but generally without the name of the author) and with a brief description of the book including indications as to how it might be of use to the reader. The literature is arranged not according to the alphabet or chronology but according to its importance for the reader. It is thus of particular interest to note Pisarev's attitude to his own direct predecessors, placing them at the top of his somewhat extensive list of publications in Russian: the first in the list of Russian books is Urvanov, the second Chekalevsky's »Thoughts on the Free Arts« and the third is Vien's »Brief Historical Overview«. Whilst the first and second places in his list of translations are occupied by practical handbooks of drawing, third place is given to the »Dictionnaire iconologique« and fourth to the works of Mengs. Amongst writings in German he gives the first and second places to Winckelmann and the third to Lessing's »Laokoon«. This surely speaks for itself: Winckelmann and Mengs are clearly the author's preferred authorities.

At the end of the literature survey Pisarev stated: »Such are the books or compositions chosen with care for the benefit of young artists. Of course I could not include all the books worthy of attention, and others might be found unworthy; but at least the most enlightened teachers can select useful books for their pupils from this ready list.«¹³⁸ He noted that he had particularly avoided selecting expensive books, since no young artist could permit himself such a purchase.

After the bibliography comes a list of illustrations and the conclusion, in which the author once more explained the aims of his treatise: not practical lessons for self-taught artists, but an attempt to set out »an understanding of the arts«¹³⁹ without which the arts are but crafts.

Pisarev's book was thus intended to gather and sort artistic experience from across the ages and lands, to serve as an intermediary between artists of the past and artists of the present, enabling the latter to make use of all the knowledge acquired by the former. The idea of a transfer of experience crops up in the writings of Vien and Chekalevsky, when they say that an artist of talent must learn from the great masters, since their experience will make his path to perfection shorter and more direct, helping him to avoid unnecessary mistakes, but both of them simply mentioned the subject in their introduction, while for Pisarev it was a recurring motif. His text is a striking example of the application of this principle, for the author had clearly absorbed the knowledge of his predecessors before going on to produce his own work, accepting or rejecting their conclusions, and in places refining and perfecting the idea of writings on the history of art.

CONCLUSION

Written within a relatively short period of time, these four Russian treatises on art differ not only in their ideological intentions but in the different ways the authors assessed the works of ancient Greece and Rome, despite making use of identical sources. Although in part determined by the authors' individual interests, this is a rare example of independent thinking, that was perhaps possible because knowledge of antiquity and of works of classical art was still a recent phenomenon in Russia in the second half of the 18th century. While Vien was interested mostly in anatomy in classical Greek and Roman art, Chekalevsky's main aim was to demonstrate how Russians succeeded to ancient art; among

them Pisarev was the most neutral in his ideological position, just collecting all the experience and being a transmitter of it to his contemporaries. It is possible to define nevertheless some similar features in all the treatises which seem to be typical for the tradition of writing about classical art in Russia for long years. These features can be defined as tends: 1) to make not an original book, but a compilation with an addition of some author's thoughts (it depends on the personality of the author how many thoughts of his own added); 2) to quote mainly foreign authorities (even though there were Russian authorities, whom the author knew); 3) to base descriptions of certain classical art works on the texts of foreign writers, sometimes trusting them without checking, what caused sometimes descriptive mistakes.¹⁴⁰

The four treatises were among the first manuals on art history for the students of the Academy of Arts. With their special attention to classical Greek and Roman art they established the ideology of perception of this art by artists for many years to come, including not only the idea of copying ancient art works, but also the predominance of rhetoric descriptive tradition over objective personal vision of ancient classical art objects, and the preference for Greek art, while Roman art was treated as secondary. On the other hand, the dependence more on foreign authorities than on Russian writers about classical antiquity became the reason why these treatises during the whole 20th century were perceived as mere examples of historical documents. They were not used by the authors of manuals on classical ancient art as sources of information and were explored more in the context of the history of art criticism.¹⁴¹

NOTES

The author is grateful to Catherine Phillips, who translated this article and provided some valuable advice regarding the adaptation of the article for non-Russian readers. The article is based on the Russian publications: Anna Petrakova: История изобразительного искусства Древней Греции и Рима в отечественных трактатах второй половины 18-начала 19 вв [The History of Ancient Greek and Roman Art in Russian Treatises of the Second Half of the 18th and Early 19th Centuries], St Petersburg 2001, MA dissertation, European University in St Petersburg, pp. 1–50, and in: Из истории архитектуры, изобразительного и декоративно-прикладного искусства [From the history of architecture, pictorial and applied art], St Petersburg 2007 (Труды [Studies of the St Petersburg State University of Culture and Art] 176), pp. 6–30.

- 1 For further detail see: История европейского искусствознания: от античности до конца XVIII века [The History of Art History and Criticism in Europe: From Antiquity to the End of the 18th Century], ed. by Boris Vipper, Moscow 1963, pp. 316–330.
- 2 Untitled unpublished manuscript presented to the Academy of Arts, St Petersburg, for acceptance as a Corresponding Member, Russian State Historical Archive, St Petersburg, Fund 789, opis' 1, chast' 1, 1767, delo 298 (Original French); Russian translation for the Academy: »Изъяснение о пользе, славе и проч. Художеств«, Fund 789, opis' 1, chast' 1, 1766, delo 246, ff. 1–9v. The text is clearly influenced by Diderot, it opens with thoughts on what political system is most beneficial for the development of the arts and concludes that it is an »enlightened« monarchy. Then follow thoughts on how each artist should realise »the idea within him« (here the influence is from the philosophy of Claude Helvétius). Golitsyn wrote of the »boundaries« of painting and poetry, of how the depiction of suffering was acceptable in poetry but not in painting (here influenced by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's »Laokoon oder Über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie«, published that same year 1766 in Berlin) and called upon artists to study nature, to acquire a good knowledge of anatomy, to draw from life and select varied models rather than those of similar build and type. In his opinion, art should preach all that is good and turn the viewer away from all that is bad.
- 3 For example, the report of the painter Anton Losenko about his study in Paris in 1765 with the title »Журнал примеченных мною знатных работ живописи и скульптуры в бытность мою в Париже« [Journal of good works of painting and sculpture noticed by me during my study in Paris], Russian State Historical Archive, St Petersburg, Fund 789, opis' 1, chast' 1, 1774, delo 72 or the »Journal« of the sculptor Mikhail Kozlovsky about his study in Rome in 1774, Russian State Historical Archive, St Petersburg, Fund 789, opis' 1, chast' 1, 1776, delo 28.
- 4 For example, the travel notes of the architect Nikolaj L'vov, inspired by art works which he saw in Italy in 1781, cf. Nikolaj A. L'vov: Italienisches Tagebuch, Ital'janskij dnevnik, ed. by Konstantin Ju. Lappo-Danilevskij, transl. by Hans Rothe, Angelika Lauhus, Cologne/Weimar/Vienna 1998 (Bausteine zur slavischen Philologie und Kulturgeschichte, Reihe B, N. F., 13)
- 5 Понятие о совершенном живописце служащее основанием судить о творениях живописцев; и примечание о портретах. Переведены первое с Итальянского, а второе с Французского коллежским асессором Архипом Ивановым [The Concept of a Perfect Painter Serving as the Basis for Judgments of the Works of Painters; and Notes on Portraits. The first translated from Italian, the second from French by Collegiate Assessor Arkhip Ivanov], St Petersburg 1789.

- 6 See Nina Moleva, *Elij Belyutin: Педагогическая система Академии художеств XVIII века* [The Pedagogical System of the Academy of Arts in the 18th Century], Moscow 1956, p. 344.
- 7 *L'ideé d'un peintre parfait pour servir de règles aux jugemens que l'on doit porter sur les ouvrages des peintres*, Paris 1666.
- 8 *Cours de peinture par principes*, composé par Mr. de Piles, Paris 1708.
- 9 Ivanov 1789 (note 5), pp. 33–36. He writes that »ancient writers preferred the best works of ancient sculpture to the creations of the nature and they praised the beauty of real people, comparing them with sculptures«; ancient sculptors did not copy blindly the nature, but »used to choose only the best in the nature«. Moreover, he writes that »the modern painter has to ›read‹ ancient art work as a book, written in foreign language, for which it is enough to understand feelings and thoughts of the author, but there is no need in translation of each word«.
- 10 Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums*, Dresden 1764.
- 11 Диссертация о влиянии анатомии в скульптуру и живопись, объясненное доказательствами, извлеченными из преданий Искусства и из самой Опытности, по существующим творениям славнейших Художников претекших веков и наших времен. Сочинение Ивана Виена. Изданное в пользу питомцев Академии художеств [Dissertation on the Influence of Anatomy on Sculpture and Painting, explained by proofs drawn from artistic traditions and from experience, through existing works of the most famed artists of past centuries and modern times. Compiled by Ivan Vien. Published for the benefit of pupils of the Academy of Arts], St Petersburg 1789.
- 12 Ivan Ivanovich Vien (Wien), a native of Moscow, trained in medicine in the medical school of the Moscow General Land Hospital (1765–67), was posted to Kiev as a physician under General Shipov in 1771 and in 1776 was appointed physician to the prestigious Izmailovsky Guards in St Petersburg. When the post of Academic Secretary at the Medical Collegium became available, Vien applied for it and was, thanks to the support of Catherine II, confirmed in the post by the Senate on 5 April 1793, with the rank of Court Counsellor. On 26 March 1797 by ruling of the Medical Collegium Vien was entrusted with printing the first volume of *Записок российских врачей на русском и латинском языках* [Notes by Russian Doctors in Russian and Latin]. The first part appeared under his editorial guidance in 1805, when he was already an Honorary Member of the Medical Collegium. For further detail see Yakov Chistovich: *История первых медицинских школ в России* [The History of the First Medical Schools in Russia], St Petersburg 1883, Appendix, pp. CXXII–CXXIV.
- 13 Краткое историческое обозрение Скульптуры и Живописи с полным показанием сильного влияния анатомии в сии два свободныя художества, объясненное доказательствами извлеченными из преданий искусства и из самой опытности, по существующим творениям славнейших Художников претекших веков и наших времен. Сочинение Коллежскаго Советника, Государственной Медицинской Коллегии и Санктпетербургскаго Вольнаго Экономическаго общества, члена Ивана Виена [A Brief Historical Overview of Sculpture and Painting with Full Demonstration of the Strong Influence of Anatomy in these Two Free Arts, explained by proofs drawn from artistic traditions and experience of them, through existing works of the most famed artists of past centuries and modern times. Compiled by Ivan Vien, Collegiate Counsellor, Member of the State Medical Collegium and the St Petersburg Free Economic Society], St Petersburg 1803.
- 14 *Разсуждение о Свободных Художествах с описанием некоторых произведений Российских художников*, издано в пользу Воспитаников Императорской Академии художеств Советником Посольства и оной Академии Конференц-секретарем Петром

- Чекалевским [Thoughts on the Free Arts with a Description of some Works by Russian Artists, published for the benefit of pupils of the Imperial Academy of Arts by Pyotr Chekalevsky, Counsellor of the Embassy and Conference Secretary of the said Academy], St Petersburg 1792.
- 15 Pyotr Petrovich Chekalevsky (1751–1817), Full Counsellor of State, Vice-President of the Academy of Arts. He was proposed for the post of Conference Secretary of the Academy of Arts by the President, Ivan Ivanovich Betskoy, taking up his duties on 1 January 1785. From 1799 he was Vice-President of the Academy and in 1811 he replaced the late Count Alexander Sergeevich Stroganov as President of the Academy. In addition to his »Thoughts on the Free Arts« Chekalevsky wrote Опыт ваяния из бронзы одним приемом колоссальных статуй [Essai sur les operations pratiquées lors de la fusion en bronze des statues colossales d'un seul jet], St Petersburg 1810, in Russian and French, with a dedication to Emperor Alexander I. For further detail see: Русский биографический словарь [Russian Biographical Dictionary], 25 vols., St Petersburg 1896–1918, vol. 22, 1905, pp. 114–115.
 - 16 Two years later Chekalevsky published Краткое руководство к истории свободных художеств. В пользу воспитанников Императорской Академии художеств [A Short Handbook to the History of the Free Arts. For the use of pupils of the Imperial Academy of Arts], St Petersburg 1794, a textbook consisting of 24 pages constructed around a series of questions and answers. Two thirds of the handbook consist of a description of the art of ancient Greece and Rome. In many ways the work is dependent on the ideas of Winckelmann. Worthy of particular note is the fact that all the arts are looked at within the context of a general history of art, not divided into the history of sculpture and the history of painting (usually running from its roots through to the 18th century), as was the case in other Russian treatises.
 - 17 Начертание художеств или правила в живописи, скульптуре, гравировании и архитектуре, с присовокуплением разных отрывков, касательно до художеств выбранных из лучших сочинителей А... Писаревым [An Outline of the Arts or Rules in Painting, Sculpture, Engraving and Architecture, with the addition of different excerpts relevant to the arts chosen from the best writers by A... Pisarev], St Petersburg 1808.
 - 18 Alexander Alexandrovich Pisarev (1780–1848), writer and trustee of Moscow University. Senator, Chairman of the Society of Lovers of Russian Philology, member of the Russian Academy. Author of Предметы для художников, избранные из Российской истории, Славянского баснословия и из всех русских сочинений в стихах и прозе [Subjects for Artists, Chosen from Russian History, Slavic Fables and from all Russian Compositions in Verse and Prose], St Petersburg 1807, and Общие правила театра, выбранные из Вольтера [General Rules for the Theatre, Selected from Voltaire], St Petersburg 1808. For further detail see: Энциклопедический словарь [Encyclopaedic Dictionary], ed. by Friedrich A. Brockhaus, Elia A. Efron, 86 vols., St Petersburg 1890–1907, vol. 23, 1898, Петропавловский-Поватажное [Petropavlovsky-Povatazhnoe], p. 687.
 - 19 Pisarev 1808 (note 17), p. 214.
 - 20 Краткое руководство к познанию рисования и живописи исторического рода, основанное на умозрении и опытах. Сочинено для учащихся художником И.У. [Short Handbook to the Knowledge of History Drawing and Painting, Founded on Speculation and Experience. Compiled for students by the artist I. U.], St Petersburg 1793, p. I. Ivan Urvanov was first a student and then a teacher at the St Petersburg Academy of Arts. His treatise consists mainly of practical information for painters and theoretical assertions regarding history painting that were characteristic of Russian Neoclassicism. It also con-

- tains a short paragraph (7) entitled »About imitating« (pp. 10–11) which is declaring that »to imitate ancient artists is almost more important than to know any rules, but it is necessary to imitate not in blindly, but in rational way«, what means »observing the works of the best artists it is necessary to compare them with the nature, defining all the used artistic techniques, helping artists to depict the nature«, but to skip all the »decorations« artists added to the »firm and energetic nature, in which juices of life are in abundance«. The same he says about the art of painters, sculptors and actors (the latter in his opinion also exaggerate sometimes, performing emotions).
- 21 Sergey N. Kondakov: Юбилейный справочник Академии художеств 1764–1914 гг. [Anniversary Reference Guide to the Academy of Arts 1764–1914], St Petersburg 1914, p. 26.
 - 22 Winckelmann's works were well known in Russia. This has been studied in detail in Konstantin Ju. Lappo-Danilevskij: Gefühl für das Schöne. Johann Joachim Winckelmanns Einfluss auf Literatur und ästhetisches Denken in Russland, Cologne/Weimar/Vienna 2007. As early as in Vien 1789 (note 11) there are references both to »Histoire de l'art de l'antiquité par Winckelmann« (pp. 5, 16) and »Geschichte der Kunst « (p. 13), what means that at least two different editions were available to him this year in Russia.
 - 23 Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, par une société de gens de lettres, mis en ordre par M. Diderot de l'Académie des Sciences et Belles-Lettres de Prusse, et quant à la partie mathématique, par M. d'Alembert de l'Académie royale des Sciences de Paris, de celle de Prusse et de la Société royale de Londres, 35 vols, Paris 1751–1780. Catherine II was in communication with Diderot from early in her reign, purchasing his library and even expressing a desire to publish excerpts from the »Encyclopédie« in Russia.
 - 24 Ivan Ivanovich Shuvalov, one of the founders of St Petersburg's Academy of Arts, purchased works of art in Europe for both Catherine and the Academy, ordering also plaster casts of classical sculptures. He spent much of the time between 1763 and 1773 travelling in Europe and lived in Rome for a while, where he associated with Winckelmann, Mengs and his followers. Shuvalov was a great admirer of Mengs' paintings and brought him to Catherine's attention. Her interest was reinforced by the recommendations of the antiquarian Johann Friedrich Reiffenstein, commissioner to the Russian court in Rome, and Baron Friedrich Melchior Grimm, through whom Catherine also acquired cameos, paintings and books abroad. Mengs' name crops up frequently in the correspondence between Catherine and Grimm, with Catherine praising the artist's considerable skill and even individual paintings, although she had not at that time ever seen one of his works. Catherine ordered the purchase of a good number of paintings and cartoons by Mengs and in 1786 the artist's »Trattato della bellezza e del gusto« in which he set out his views on the history of art was translated into Russian: Trattato della bellezza e del gusto. Lettera a Don Antonio Ponz sopra il merito de' quadri del Real Palazzo di Madrid. Lezioni pratiche su del colorito..., in: Baldassare Orsini: Antologia dell'arte pittorica, Augusta 1784. Russian edition: Письмо Дон Антония Рафаэла Менгса, первого живописца двора Его Величества Короля Испанского к Дон Антонию Понзу, переведенное с Испанскаго (писаннаго самим художником) на Итальянскою, а с Итальянскаго на Российский [Letter from Don Anton Raphael Mengs, First Painter to the Court of His Majesty the King of Spain to Don Antonio Ponz, translated from the Spanish (written by the artist himself) into Italian, and from Italian into Russian], St Petersburg 1786.
 - 25 M. D. P. [Honoré Lacombe de Prezel]: Dictionnaire iconologique, ou introduction à la connoissance des peintures, sculptures, medailles, estampes, etc., Paris 1756. Russian edition:

- Иконологический лексикон или руководство к познанию живописного и резного художеств, медалей, эстампов и проч., с описанием, взятым из разных древних и новых Стихотворцев. С Французского переведен Академии Наук переводчиком Иваном Акимовым [Iconological Lexicon or Handbook for the Knowledge of the Painted and Carved Arts, Medals, Prints etc., with Descriptions Taken from Different Ancient and Modern Poets. Translated from French by Ivan Akimov, translator of the Academy of Sciences], St Petersburg 1763.
- 26 A phrase characterising the estimation of ancient Greek sculpture is to be found in the article «Резное художество» [The Art of Carving] which describes its main attributes and calls to follow the Torso, the Apollo, or the Laocoon in imitation of nature, cf. Iconological Lexicon 1793 (note 25), p. 257 of the Russian edition. The article on Laocoon (*ibid.*, pp. 161–63) includes a prose quotation from Virgil's «Aeneid» and expresses a certain criticism of Laocoon's sculptural nakedness. The author of the «Lexicon» compares Virgil's description and the sculptural group and comes to the conclusion that Virgil was inspired by the latter. In the article on Venus the author describes Praxiteles' sculpture on the basis of Lucian, *ibid.*, pp. 40–45.
- 27 See note 24.
- 28 It is clear that he had read the works of other Russian authors which had appeared before 1789, but which he had not seen at that time. The same is true for some foreign works, such as Mengs' «Trattato», which is not mentioned in the «Dissertation» but cited in «A Brief Historical Overview».
- 29 Vien 1789 (note 11), p. 85. – Vien 1803 (note 13), p. 158.
- 30 Knyazhin was secretary to Ivan Betskoy from 1778 on. «Послания к российским питомцам свободных художеств» [Message to Russian Pupils of the Free Arts]. It is a poetic message, first published in «Утра», еженедельное издание, или собрание разного рода новейших сочинений и некоторых переводов в стихах и прозе с приобщением известия о всех выходящих в Санкт-Петербурге российских книгах [«Mornings», weekly or collection of the newest works and some translations in poetry and prose with an addition of the news of all the published Russian books in St Petersburg], St Petersburg 1782, August, p. 3 (item 81). This «Message...» probably develops the ideas Knyazhin expressed in his speech during the public meeting in the Academy of Arts in 1779.
- 31 «In vain do you without sound learning's aid, Place hopes in what your hands have made; Without good education all your works are vain, All sculpture is but puppetry, all painting worthy of disdain.» Собрание сочинений Якова Княжнина [Collected works by Yakov Knyazhnin], 4 vols., St Petersburg 1787. vol. 4, p. 199.
- 32 Vien 1789 (note 11), pp. 8–11.
- 33 *Ibid.*, pp. 3–12. – Vien 1803 (note 13), p. 3.
- 34 Chekalevsky 1792 (note 14), pp. 19–20. – Pisarev 1808 (note 17), pp. 38–39. Cf. Winckelmann 1764 (note 10), vol. I, chapter IV, part 1 and 2.
- 35 Vien 1789 (note 11), pp. 12, 22, 23–25, etc., Vien 1803 (note 13), pp. 2, 8, 21, 35, 37, 38, 43, 49, 53, 70 etc.
- 36 These four authors are often quoted, while Plato, Cicero, Vitruvius, Diodorus Siculus, Quintilianus, Xenophon, Diogenes Laertius, Athenodorus, Ovidius, Lucien, Anacreon, Tacitus, Philostratus (Vita Appoloni), Aelian, Petronius and Aristophanes are mentioned but seldom.
- 37 Also mentioned are: Andre Lens about costume (p. 8), l'abbé Salier (p. 9), de Caylus (p. 9), Warburton (p. 14), Richard Pococks (p. 15) Bernard de Montfaucon (p. 23), l'abbé Richard (pp. 24–25), l'abbé du Bos (p. 27) and some others.

- 38 Vien 1798 (note 11), pp. 14–15. – Vien 1803 (note 13), pp. 23–24.
- 39 Vien 1789 (note 11), p. 15. – Vien 1803 (note 13), p. 24
- 40 Vien 1789 (note 11), pp. 15–16, note n.
- 41 *Ibid.*, p. 15. – Vien 1803 (note 13), pp. 24–25. Cf. Winckelmann 1764 (note 10), vol. I, chapter 1, part 1, where Winckelmann writes about lack of knowledge, especially in anatomy precisely with the words »and finally the last reason«. It is even more interesting, because Vien himself gives a footnote with reference »Winckelmann Hist. de l'art de L'antiquité Tome I. Ch. 2. p. 60«, what confirms that he had read Winckelmann carefully but disagreed with him in this point.
- 42 Chekalevsky 1792 (note 14), p. 13.
- 43 Pisarev 1808 (note 17), pp. 29–30.
- 44 Vien 1789 (note 11), pp. 20–21, note n, with reference to »Winckelmann I. c. Tome II. Page 57«. Cf. Winckelmann 1764 (note 10), vol. I, chapter 4, part 3.
- 45 Cf. Vien 1789 (note 11), pp. 21–22 and Vien 1803, pp. 46–47 (note 13).
- 46 Vien 1789 (note 11), p. 24.
- 47 *Ibid.*
- 48 *Ibid.*, p. 25.
- 49 *Ibid.*, p. 26. Sometimes Vien is self-contradictory in his writings. For example, on pp. 30–31 he criticises the group of the Niobids because of the too sophisticated composition and the Laocoon because of the nakedness as it is not appropriate to depict respected priests naked, while on p. 58 writing about vivid movements of soul which good artist have to depict in a decent way he states that »this demonstrates us Laocoon, who shows vivid image of grief and torment« and the Niobids »show horror in perfect and proper way«.
- 50 *Ibid.*, pp. 24–29.
- 51 Vien wrote: »Moreover, the information and evidence provided by all ancient writers on paintings are largely of dubious verity, and are sometimes absolutely unbelievable; berries drawn such that birds fly down to peck at them; horses painted such that when real horses see them they start to neigh; these may have been perceived by Pliny as wonders, with which he burdened his writing even to excess [...] what would he have said if he could have seen paintings by the hands of Raphael and Rubens!« Vien 1789 (note 11), pp. 41–42. In »A Brief Historical Overview« Vien was even more cutting: »None of this is deserving of praise, for it is not in the simple and slavish copying but in the intelligent imitation of nature that the direct merit of painting lies.« The author goes on to compare the Greeks with masters of *trompe l'oeil*, stating ironically that Greek authors would have been far more admiring of the latter than of Apelles and Zeuxis. Vien 1803 (note 13), p. 67.
- 52 Vien 1789 (note 11), p. 49. – Vien 1803 (note 13), pp. 58–60.
- 53 Vien 1789 (note 11), p. 49.
- 54 *Ibid.*, pp. 50–54. – Vien 1803 (note 13), pp. 91–105.
- 55 Vien 1789 (note 11), p. 68.
- 56 In this case Aristophanes.
- 57 Vien 1789 (note 11), p. 69.
- 58 *Ibid.*, pp. 70–71, note u.
- 59 *Ibid.*, pp. 70–71.
- 60 *Ibid.*, pp. 71–76.
- 61 *Ibid.*, pp. 77–78, note c with reference to »Winckelmann I. c. Tome I. page 514«. Cf. Winckelmann 1764 (note 10), Introduction.
- 62 *Ibid.*, pp. 79–83.

- 63 Ibid., p. 84. – In 1803, however, Vien deplored the neglected status of anatomy in teaching (see below).
- 64 Ibid., p. 86.
- 65 Vien does not mention Russian masters except in two footnotes, where he names as worthy of mention just four Russian painters – Gavriil Kozlov, Anton Losenko, Pyotr Sokolov and Ivan Akimov – and four sculptors – Fyodor Gordeev, Fedot Shubin, Mikhail Kozlovsky, Feodosy Shchedrin – whilst providing no description of their style or the names of any of their works. Ibid., p. 82, note d.
- 66 For instance, just as Phidias' Jupiter was inspired by the »Iliad«, so Grigory Ugryumov's »Taking of Kazan« was inspired by Mikhail Matveevich Kheraskov's »Rossiada«. Vien 1803 (note 13), p. 9.
- 67 Vien called for historical authenticity in costume, recommending several foreign books for this purpose. His ideas coincide in many ways with those of Roger de Piles. See Ivanov 1789 (note 5), pp. 210–211.
- 68 For instance: »The Greeks also, attributing to themselves the honour of having invented this art, pushed their claim through a complex fairytale of their own weaving in order to convince us that the gentle maiden Dibutades of Corinth supposedly first sketched a shadow picture of the face of her beloved using lamp black (Pliny) and that supposedly this was the first example of skiagraphia.« Vien 1803 (note 13), p. 57.
- 69 He was now much more negative in his assessment of the Niobids, in which »there are many fine figures but an excess of detail and a poverty of poetic depiction«. Vien 1803 (note 13), p. 46. – In 1789 he compared »The Bronze Horseman« (monument to Peter I) erected in St Petersburg by Falconet (1768–70) to the Niobids judging the first a much better work, Vien 1789 (note 11), pp. 30–31, note m. In 1803 he praised the monument to the Russian military commander Alexander Suvorov by Mikhail Kozlovsky (1801) as a much better work than the Niobids, too.
- 70 Among them Henry Fuseli whose »Lectures on Painting«, delivered at the Royal Academy (London 1801), would seem to have been among the works he had read in the last fourteen years, and Gotthold E. Lessing: »Look then at the Laocoon, and this work, although Mr Fuseli seeks by all means to disprove this, not only cannot stand in comparison with the wonderful poetic image of the said Virgil, but even demonstrates quite important defects in that firstly, instead of depicting suffering which might arouse sympathy in each viewer, it on the contrary brings on only a sense of horror; secondly the serpents in this depiction are not at all natural in their state, for these reptilian beasts never twist so strongly as shown here when making their attack; and thirdly and lastly, although Herr Lessing seeks to assert the contrary, was it natural or decent to present this Laocoon, Priest of Apollo, a worthy Elder, naked at the moment of his unhappy fate, sacrificed to Neptune, divine ruler of the seas?« Vien 1803 (note 13), pp. 46–47, note 95.
- 71 Cf. Vien 1789 (note 11), p. 31, note n and Vien 1803 (note 13), p. 47, note 95 – in 1789 Vien accused only Laocoon's nakedness as inappropriate for the depiction of a respected priest, while in 1803, when Lessing and Fuseli were involved in the polemics, he was arguing with them. This demonstrates the process of Vien's thinking on the subject and that even European authorities could not persuade him of the high quality of this masterpiece.
- 72 Vien writes that Cicero, Quintilian, Valerius Maximus, Pliny and others praised this painting and this artist because the face of the suffering father was hidden by a veil, since suffering cannot be depicted by painterly methods, and indeed should not be depicted, for Agamemnon was a great warrior and his face should not be distorted. »But I«, continued

- Vien, »like Falconet and Reynolds, consider that this is a sign of the artist's lack of talent«, as it should surely be a key element in the painting. What the artist had done was as if the main character in a tragedy were to remain silent throughout the most terrible scene. According to Vien, Voltaire too would have been critical of Timanthes. Vien 1803 (note 13), pp. 60–66.
- 73 Such as the monument to Russian military commander Alexander Suvorov by Mikhail Kozlovsky, 1801, Suvorovskaya Ploshchad, St Petersburg, Vien 1803 (note 13), p. 47, note 95 – contrasted to the »unsuccessful« Laocoon.
- 74 Vien 1803 (note 13), pp. 158–159, note 286.
- 75 Chekalevsky 1792 (note 14), p. 0.
- 76 The arts were invented to meet man's needs and were then transformed into luxury and entertainment, although they also serve a useful purpose, since with their aid our senses develop and our hearts and minds become more active, and it is in this that man differs from animals. Nature deliberately endowed with greatest beauty those objects which are most necessary; for instance, people must live together in order to survive, hence the beauty of the human form. By contrast everything that is harmful is ugly (for instance a bad person). In the arts man must follow the same principles as nature, depicting all that is good and necessary as a thing of beauty (citing as an example Cicero who ordered that virtue be depicted so that his son would fall in love with it) and all that is evil as a thing of ugliness; if the artist does not do this, his art will be of no use and he will not be patronised by an enlightened sovereign. Chekalevsky 1792 (note 14), pp. 1–12.
- 77 Winckelmann had written on this subject, cf. Winckelmann 1764 (note 10), vol. I, chapter IV, part I. Of the Russians, Pisarev devoted a whole chapter to thoughts on the influence of government on the development of the arts.
- 78 As an example he cites Diogetius, who became tutor to Emperor Marcus Aurelius, and of whom the Emperor said: »From this artist I learned to differentiate verity from falsity, and not take invention for truth.« Chekalevsky 1792 (note 14), p. 20.
- 79 Here the example is Polygnotos, who refused to take payment for his works several times in succession, and was rewarded by a general council for his selflessness with the right to accommodation in all towns at public cost.
- 80 »Rome did not summon the Muses, but rather gave them shelter, as to a wanderer.« Chekalevsky 1792 (note 14), p. 24.
- 81 *Ibid.*, pp. 24–25. Compare this with Pisarev's thoughts on the monarchy and the development of the arts, cf. Pisarev 1808 (note 17), pp. 158–163.
- 82 Chekalevsky 1792 (note 14), pp. 24–25.
- 83 *Ibid.*, pp. 25–26.
- 84 *Ibid.*, pp. 30–31.
- 85 *Ibid.*, pp. 20–21.
- 86 »The Academy of Arts established in St Petersburg reveals our wise Legislator's intention that the fine arts inspire all to strive towards virtue.« Chekalevsky 1792 (note 14), p. 37.
- 87 *Ibid.*, p. 37.
- 88 *Ibid.*, pp. 39–40.
- 89 In sculpture, anything superfluous is anathema; it should depict less objects than a painting; all Greek sculptures are remarkable for their simplicity. Sculpture has its own particular difficulties: deficiencies cannot be hidden, for instance through the use of shadow; it must be seen in the round. The physical work itself is slow and boring. It lacks some of the advantages of painting such as the colour, therefore the sculptor has to invent something

- that will draw the viewer's attention. Errors cannot be corrected, while that is easily done in painting. Sculpture enforces minimalism – often not more than a single figure (»the sculptor should pronounce not a speech but a single word, but that word must be outstanding, in order to express the essence of the work«); sculpture is more difficult in terms of the display requirements; each art form has its own means of expression which are harmful to other art forms; in sculpture, the drawing must be of the greatest precision (in painting good use of colour often smoothes over poor drawing); sculpture is extremely labour-intensive (therefore it is a shame to waste time and effort on trifles) and long-lasting (therefore one must be conscientious in one's efforts, for in generations to come the sculptor's skills will be visible even if only a fragment survives). Chekalevsky 1792 (note 14), p. 46. Among all the Russian authors of his time only Chekalevsky pays much attention to the difference between sculpture and painting. Vien is more interested in anatomy, Pisarev does not make much analysis. Only in the book by Archip Ivanov are some ideas, similar to Chekalevsky's. Cf. Ivanov 1789 (note 5), pp. 33–36.
- 90 Cf. Chekalevsky 1792 (note 14), pp. 52–56 and Winckelmann 1764 (note 10), vol. II, chapter IV and some ideas from vol. I, chapter IV, part 2.
- 91 Winckelmann 1764 (note 10), vol. I, chapter IV, part 3.
- 92 Chekalevsky 1792 (note 14), p. 73–74.
- 93 Vien 1789 (note 11), pp. 29–31.
- 94 Winckelmann 1764 (note 10), vol. II, chapter 2.
- 95 Chekalevsky 1792 (note 14), pp. 79–86.
- 96 *Ibid.*, p. 87.
- 97 *Ibid.*, pp. 87–99.
- 98 *Ibid.*, pp. 100–154. It starts by defining the art of painting (»painting is the art of presenting all visible objects on a flat and even surface using lines and paints«), its effect on the viewer (»it captivates the soul through the senses, it pleases the eye«) and its aims and purpose (»it shows distant or no longer extant objects«, news, events from fables and the Bible, »of which we consider it a pleasure to discover the meaning«, and most important, it presents to our eyes objects upon which we could never in real life look without horror). Rulers used painting and statues, victims brought into court depictions of crimes against them (according to Quintilian); painting has more power over people than poetry, since it is perceived with the eyes (painting has a stronger effect on man in a hot climate, therefore the Jews banned the creation of images). Here Chekalevsky moves on to thoughts about painting and poetry in the spirit of Lessing. The painter of intellect but not talent is a copyist; in order to give a work spirit and animation one must have not only intellect and a skilled hand (which must be trained and exercised) but an eye, imagination. One should practice that form of painting in which one is most talented. One should avoid boredom and haste. Wealth impedes a love of work but the arts should receive financial encouragement. In Greece the most glorious artists were always singled out; the works of the best adorned not private houses but publicly accessible places. After these general thoughts the author sets out the history of art itself. Cf. similar ideas about the difference between visual and descriptive arts under the influence of Aristotle and Lessing in Ivanov 1789 (note 5), pp. I–V. Vien and Pisarev did not pay much attention to these things.
- 99 Chekalevsky 1792 (note 14), pp. 112–113.
- 100 *Ibid.*, p. 114.
- 101 »Apelles was notable for the pleasing gentleness of his brush; Aesclepiodorus for the placing of his figures and the overall harmony of his pictures, Protogenes for his precision,

- Pamphilus and Melanthius for their many compositions, Antiphilus and Echion for their superb talent and fiery imagination.« Chekalevsky 1792 (note 14), p. 115.
- 102 Ibid., pp. 117–121. With a reference – obligatory in most contemporary Russian treatises – to the fact that in 1753 the count de Caylus managed to revive the »en caustique« technique after long experimentation.
- 103 Ibid., pp. 134–135.
- 104 Ibid., p. 134.
- 105 Ibid., pp. 149–155.
- 106 For there are no parts on architecture in both of Vien’s books and only a rather small chapter on the subject in Pisarev’s book Chekalevsky’s part on architecture is not examined in detail here.
- 107 »Thus already visible are the fruits of this institution, famed in Catherine’s merciful reign and intended not only to teach the arts: but turning its main attention to instilling in young heart morality, love of virtue, an awareness of public duty, such that this education produces sons worthy of the fatherland. While not all those who complete the appointed period in the Academy have achieved equal success in the arts, due to the difference in their spiritual gifts and abilities, they received, together with all kinds of knowledge, the basis of morality and good behaviour, affirming the union of society and demonstrating the duty of a good citizen, and can be useful in any post, whether in the state service or simply to their fellow men.« Ibid., pp. 230–231.
- 108 Ibid., pp. 87–99; 149–155.
- 109 »I wished to produce a rough outline for those embarking on the study of the arts, to which they might then themselves add«. Pisarev 1808 (note 17), pp. 212–213.
- 110 De Piles 1708 (note 8). According to Pisarev, Roger de Piles suggested that all painters be judged using a particular scale. Like de Piles, he divided painting into four main parts: composition, drawing, colour, expression. Each part is a »voice« which is marked on a scale from 1 to 20, in which 20 is unachievable perfection; 19 achievable, although none has so far achieved it; 18 closest of all to perfection; etc. The work of Raphael is marked thus on this scale: 17 for composition; 18 for drawing, 12 for colouring, 18 for expression (same as de Piles). When added together, these »voices« give the artist’s »weight« – for Raphael, 65 points. Raphael has the greatest »weight« of all the masters cited by Pisarev (and de Piles).
- 111 Устав Императорской Академии художеств [Charter of the Imperial Academy of Arts], Chapter 1, section 4 § 3.
- 112 Pisarev 1808 (note 17), p. 0.
- 113 Ibid., pp. 0–1.
- 114 The second chapter is devoted to the question of talent and training (which talents an artist needs, how to recognise them, from what age they should be trained etc). In the chapter »On first principles« the text describes the first exercises in the art form and suggests that the young artist start not with drawing from life but from drawings taken from nature by the best artists. »On proportion« sets out the necessary proportions of the male and female figures, derived from Greek statues. The fifth chapter is devoted to the materials required for drawing. The sixth deals with perspective. Later chapters are structured not as questions and answers but as continuous text. There are separate discussions of anatomy (not without the influence of the writings of Vien), expression, taste, grace, light and shade, »suitability« – all taking the Greeks as an example (noting that their paintings were known only from descriptions by classical authors). Then come texts on rural views (based on the writings of the unknown »A. Kepen«, whose three letters on the depiction of rural views form a sepa-

- rate part of Pisarev's publication), on the modern schools of painting (Rome, Venice etc., all characteristic of the 18th century), on the main kinds of painting (history, battle etc., also in accordance with contemporary standards), and on the various uses of painting (on the techniques of painting from antiquity to the 18th century). Unlike Vien or Chekalevsky, Pisarev follows texts of foreign and Russian writers, his main aim is to collect as much as possible data from different sources without any attempt to argue with his predecessors.
- 115 Pisarev 1808 (note 17), p. 42.
- 116 *Ibid.*, pp. 42–44. In this description he calls Laocoon »a perfect work of art deserving attention and wonder of the descendants at least because since this sculpture nothing has been made what can be compared with this outstanding work«. Compare this with the position of Vien, who criticises Laocoon and thinks that Russian sculptors made better works.
- 117 *Ibid.*, pp. 45–46.
- 118 *Ibid.*, pp. 46–49.
- 119 *Ibid.*, pp. 49–51.
- 120 *Ibid.*, pp. 51–52.
- 121 *Ibid.*, pp. 52–54.
- 122 *Ibid.*, pp. 34–35.
- 123 *Ibid.*, p. 38.
- 124 *Ibid.*, pp. 38–39. In the Russian text he uses the term ›beau ideale‹ in brackets.
- 125 *Ibid.*, p. 40.
- 126 *Ibid.*, p. 41.
- 127 *Ibid.*, p. 104.
- 128 *Ibid.*, p. 115.
- 129 *Ibid.*, pp. 120–125.
- 130 *Ibid.*, p. 121.
- 131 *Ibid.*, p. 122.
- 132 Francesco Milizia's treatise »Dell'arte di vedere nelle belle arti del disegno secondo i principi di Sulzer e di Mengs«, Venice, 1781, was translated into Russian only in 1827. Pisarev seems to have read it in the Italian original.
- 133 In this sense Mengs was the perfect artist.
- 134 Pisarev 1808 (note 17), pp. 158–163.
- 135 *Ibid.*, pp. 164–175.
- 136 *Ibid.*, pp. 176–187.
- 137 Apelles and the cobbler; Apelles and the pupil who produced a work at speed; Apelles and the pupil who drew Helen; Nicomaches and the man who criticised Zeuxis' Helen; Apelles and the portrait of Antigonus that had one crooked eye; Praxiteles and the cunning of Phryne; how Eupompus taught Lysippus to imitate nature and not other artists; how Nikias was so carried away by his work that he forgot to eat; how the town of Sicyon paid off its enemies in works of art by Pamphilus and Melanthis, and Rhodes with a painting by Protogenes etc.
- 138 Pisarev 1808 (note 17), p. 210.
- 139 *Ibid.*, pp. 212–214.
- 140 Anna Petrakova: Sculpture group »Laocoon« in descriptions of the 18th–20th centuries. Problem of perception of artworks, in: Proceedings of the conference dedicated to the centenary of M. V. Dobroklonsky in St Petersburg State Institute of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture, 2006 (Studies of the Academy of Arts 5), pp. 151–158.

141 In the Russian books of the 20th century on the history of the Academy of Arts or on the history of theory of art Pisarev's and Chekalevsky's treatises used to be mentioned with some comments, while both Vien's books, much more original and independent, were not evaluated in a proper way and even sometimes were referred to with mistakes about the author. Vien's book of 1789 is mentioned, for example, in История европейского искусствознания: от античности до конца XVIII века [The History of Art History and Criticism in Europe: From Antiquity to the End of the 18th Century], Moscow 1963, Vien's book of 1803 – in История европейского искусствознания. Первая половина XIX века [The History of Art History and Criticism in Europe: the first half of the 19th Century], Moscow 1965. In Nina Moleva, Elij Belyutin: Педагогическая система Академии художеств XVIII века [The Pedagogical System of the Academy of Arts in the 18th Century], Moscow 1956, p. 345, only Vien's book of 1789 is mentioned. In Natalia Kovalenskaia: Русский классицизм [Russian classicism], Moscow 1964, pp. 47–75 both books are mentioned, while in Tatyana Iliyna: Русское искусство XVIII века [Russian art of the 18th century] Moscow 1999, p. 201 Ivan Vien mistakenly is called »French painter Vien«, means Joseph Marie Vien.

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