

painterly interest absent in their work by rejecting them. To endeavor, on the contrary, to express them vividly and positively by painterly means.

I turn away from the West because for me personally it has dried up and because my sympathies lie with the East.

The West has shown me one thing: everything it has is from the East.<sup>1</sup>

I consider of profound interest that which is now called philistine vulgarity, because it is untouched by the art of blockheads — their thoughts are directed exclusively to the heights only because they cannot attain them; and also because philistine vulgarity is predominant nowadays — contemporaneity is characterized by this. But there is no need to fear it; it is quite able to be an object of artistic concern.

Artistic vulgarity is much worse because it is inevitable; it is like the percentage of crime in the world, uniform at all times and in all arts.

My last word is a stone thrown at artistic vulgarity — ever aspiring to occupy the place of an achievement of genius.

P.S.: My aspiration toward the East is not my last development — I mean only to broaden my outlook; countries that value artistic traditions can help me to this.

For me the East means the creation of new forms, an extending and deepening of the problems of color.

This will help me to express contemporaneity — its living beauty — better and more vividly.

I aspire toward nationality and the East, not to narrow the problems of art but, on the contrary, to make it all-embracing and universal.

If I extol the art of my country, then it is because I think that it fully deserves this and should occupy a more honorable place than it has done hitherto.

#### NOTE

1. The impressionists from the Japanese. The synthetists, Gauguin from India spoiled by its early renaissance. From the islands of Tahiti he apprehended nothing, apart from a tangible type of woman. Matisse—Chinese painting. The cubists—Negroes (Madagascar), Aztecs. As for the past—certain historians are sadly mistaken in deducing a Romanesque influence, even a German influence, on our icons. This is so only in isolated cases; generally speaking, what is the Romanesque style but the last stage of Byzantine development? Romanesque style is based on Greco-Byzantine, Eastern, Georgian, and Armenian models. If Eastern influence reached us in a roundabout way, then this does not prove anything—its path was from the East, and the West, as now, served merely as an intermediate point. Suffice it to consider Arabian and Indian depiction to establish the genesis of our icons and of the art that has hitherto existed among the common people.

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Vladimir Markov

## TEXTURE MATERIAL

### CRUCIAL FACTORS DETERMINING TEXTURE

In painting by texture we usually mean the state of the picture surface as it is perceived by our eye and senses. But as we are going to see below, texture has a similar meaning in sculpture, architecture and all other arts in which paints, tones and other means produce a certain 'noise' perceived by our consciousness in one way or another.

#### *Material*

An analysis of this principle naturally brings forth material: nothing can be said or done without it. Sometimes it is our good ally, our friend, sometimes the same material is our enemy which must be fought.

Little can be done to platinum; it offers great difficulties in plastic processing while stone can be cut, sawn, polished, etc.

But take hair as material.

Here the history of culture can demonstrate best what diverse forms can be achieved with this material.

A resident of Tierra del Fuego lets it grow freely and his hair is hard as a bush. Assyria curls it, Bushmen tie it and band it with hare's tails, feathers, metal buttons.

Australia powders hair with red ochre and binds it with dough made of grease and ochre. Guinea puts it together with wax which makes it shine as if polished and powders it with white parrot down.

Japan pays much attention to the forms of hair-dos, while China makes ornamental partings.

Rococo with its wigs and other epochs produced hair-dos of most diverse forms and textures.

Love for material encourages man.

He likes to decorate and work on it, which allows man to get from the material all its inherent forms, 'noises', everything we call texture.

Material is the mother of texture. Every newly-invented material can offer new elements which constitute new endless rows of textures.

For the sake of creating a pleasant texture we do not scorn any materials.

We continue covering our body with powder and salves to make it more pleasant to the eye.

In Guinea natives paint their whole bodies with a mixture of coal powder and grease and they are proud when they manage to achieve a deep metal tone.

But that is not enough; man does not scorn any techniques to decorate the surface.

What have we done to our bodies? Tattooed, covered with scars, pierced, hardened, adorned with pendants! Primitive man hung upon him almost everything he liked and endured numerous sufferings just for the sake of his body acquiring the desired texture. This is even truer today: our clothes, shawls, perfumes, colours help us create a certain noise for the eye. Just ask any female member of society whether she can live without beautiful texture, without admiring her own hair and hands.

Every nation had and still has an unbeatable desire to create plastic beauty; they were never stopped by the extreme scarcity of materials.

Eskimos paint with red ochre or black coal dipped in oil on pieces of whaleskin, they construct their small churches of sealskin. New Zealand makes pictures of men and gods from a spongy substance; they look strange when dry, but after the tide or rain the figures inflate, their forms and textures become original, inaccessible to other materials.

Such materials as the bones, skin, eyes and other parts of the human body did not escape plastic application either.

In a church in Bohemia many decorations and building elements, such as piers, chandeliers, emblems or profiles are made of human bones. We can discover the same among Indians, who put finger bones on a band of human skin and wear them as necklaces. In libraries we find books with bindings of human skin; the practice remains to this day. In Chicago a lady from high society wears a necklace made of specially processed eyes of Peruvians. Embroideries of human hair were very widespread once. Not so long ago a large figure of Buddha was made in Japan in honour of heroes who had been killed for which about 85,000 women sacrificed their hair.

But what is even stranger, materials absolutely unfit for expressing plastic ideas are also used.

Chambers of curiosities in museums are rich in such articles. I remember only some of them. We find bunches of flowers made of the wings of butterflies and fish scales. We come across painted images of saints on egg white films. Straw is used for making mosaics, pictures, vestments, clothes. There is a mitre from colibri feathers in Vienna. We find landscapes made of multicoloured sand, dust, etc.

#### *Shine*

A liking for everything shining is one of the most striking examples of attachment to a definite texture; it is found in almost all living beings.

Shining fruit, butterflies, feathers, stones, teeth, crystals, stars have always entertained the eye. In South America fragments of glass tied to necklaces are the most precious decoration among the natives. Bushmen are happy when they can obtain a metal ring. Magpies steal shining objects, animals play with them. The latter example makes us think that the sense of texture is not alien to animals.

An abundance of brilliance can also be undesirable; we soften the shine of metals, dim glass, darken polish, expose stones on their rough side.

Moscow has church domes of varying brilliance, to stifling blue.

We like it when metal parts shine on doors, but we prevent bronze monuments from shining in the same way.

Iridescent colours have appeared in our industry, for instance, fabrics with a metal shine, transparent and fluorescent colours.

In general it can be said that different degrees of smoothness, transparency, intensity of colour, oxidation, etc. produce various shines.

#### *Colour agents*

If we take any pure colour agent, we shall notice that it always has its own structure, its 'skin', its texture. If you compare ground, sand colours with varnishes, floral and chemical colours, the difference becomes evident. Even if we take only ochre, we will see that it does not exist as something stable; there are numerous sorts of various chemical and mechanical combinations, some oilier, others drier, depending on admixtures and naturally having different qualities and thus related to other materials such as water, oil, paint.

Paint was extracted from the most diverse sources by different peoples. Take the sources of yellow paint, for instance! It was produced from the nests of a certain breed of ants, from camel excrement, from sulphur, clay, etc.

In some forms of painting (frescos, for instance) the texture of individual colour agents is especially noticeable.

But in painting we mostly deal with colour agents that are ground into powder, mixed with oil, or water which undoubtedly kills the 'skin' of paint. Still we see, feel the 'skin' of paint, distinguish between plant and sand paint.

In nature we also distinguish and feel the texture and material despite reflections, the levelling air and other obstacles.

In mixing colour agents we notice that the individual qualities of each paint are lost; sometimes white as an admixture to every colour, evidently levels all the natural individual qualities of colour agents. Still the texture of colour agents cannot be fully destroyed, only altered within known limits; the paste thus achieved will affect us in one way or another.

#### *Non-material texture*

A few words must be said about texture in painting born of its non-material essence.

It is a mistake to think that only the material, the method of processing and blending it form the texture of the object.

If we draw a line on the blank surface of a piece of paper, we thus change the texture of the surface because every spot, dash on a blank, even surface destroys its seeming evenness and silence.

A large number of images on a clean surface will offer a 'noise' to the eye other than a surface carrying few forms. The combination of colours can give a sense of peace or irritate. Straight, wavy or broken lines have different effects on us. The contrasts of light and shadow produce a 'noise' different from impartial half-light or half-shadow.

Even associations aroused by material or artistic symbols can create the feeling of various non-material 'noises' or textures.

Some believe that iron is unable to convey to us a feeling of weight or volume, but that is within the reach of stone, that iron offers stability without demonstrating mighty power and therefore stone sculptures are more monumental. It has been discovered that red colour agents are agitating, blue calming, some paints are 'healthy', while aniline paints, for instance, are 'sick' etc.

On the basis of the above I believe that all principles of creative art play a great role in forming non-material texture. Hence the choice of colour agents with their light and colour elements, formal contents, associations, all principles of creation - all of them form the non-material texture.

#### *Working Surface*

The surface on which one has to paint is important, the nature which the colour agent is going to assume as well as the manner depend on it. Paint will flow differently on silk, plaster or oil undercoat. The same is true in sculpture. The structure and firmness of the material show the road which the instrument should follow.

#### *Tools*

Possible forms and working techniques depend on the tools.

Old brushes produce arbitrary brushwork, spatulas spread paint in even, shining and rich layers, etc.

We know from history that even with the most modest means it was possible to achieve what was not achieved with the most advanced instruments.

The ornaments in the Church of the Stratilatus in Novgorod were made with simple iron instruments. Many valuables in Australia are made merely by a sharp stone, volcanic glass, a shell, tooth or even scratched by nails.

Of course, the modesty of instruments sometimes requires greater muscular effort and many old works clearly indicate that. In them we can distinguish traces of temperament, hear the talk of the tools involved and appreciate their effects.

#### *Manner*

Tremendous significance in forming texture is given by many to manner and many erroneously reduce texture to manner.

By brushwork alone one can distinguish a noble artist from a trivial one.

Pointillism, thick brushes, spreading, intensive lamination are considered by many the necessary techniques that can help produce a good surface in a painting; wild hits of the brush, the use of fingers and spatula, scrubbing with a knife, alternating carelessness and accuracy should live up the surface.

Vasari said: Primitivists used several palettes each of a separate tone. Lorenzo di Credi was especially particular about technique: his palette sometimes had 20 to 30 tones and he had a separate brush for every shade. Instead of a palette Amico Aspertini used pots as for fresco painting and hung them around his waist.

When Watteau returned to a canvas which had been used he indifferently wiped it with oil and overpainted. He rarely cleaned his palette and used the same paint for several days. The oil dish which he constantly used was filled with filth and dust, the oil in it mixed with various paints that flowed from brushes when he dipped them in the dish.

#### *Binding Materials*

497

Many hate oil, destroy it by a special absorbing undercoat or add kerosene, siccatives, etc. to paint.

Instead of oil, Proudhon sought a finer binding material for colour agents. And after many experiments he produced a fine salve which gave paintings an almost porcelain look and like porcelain gave the surface light eerie reflections.

A well-known material used as a binder alters the colour value. Some colour combinations, unpleasant on the one hand and unattainable on the other, in materials, for instance, in wool, are quite acceptable, possible and rich, for instance in silk, where they show off by their metal shine and reflections.

#### *One material enslaving another*

Just as after rain stones sparkle like pearls, iridesce, and stone pavements change beyond recognition, coloured objects alter under the influence of varnishes, resins and glazing.

The custom of covering pictures with resins came to us from the Orient.

Drying oil was poured over icons. Miniatures in Byzantine manuscripts were also often covered with resins, drying oil, etc.

The enslavement of one material by another or the interaction of several produce a new texture.

The Chinese cover their porcelain with glazing and paintings to the extent that vases seem to have just been taken out of water; one could think one was holding a wet object.

In general the overlap of different textures generates new, unexpected textures. There is porcelain with a metal shine produced by overflowing layers of glass glazes. There are vases with a dull finish, a powdered look, thin and transparent as paper letting the light through, cloudy, dirty, intensive, oxidised, covered with a patina of time.

#### *Frame*

Rubies and sapphires are lost, no matter how perfectly, polished without a setting, therefore a setting must accompany every treated object. As for materials used for frames, it must be stressed that Europe loves to frame its pictures with contrasting materials.

The Orient (China, Japan) makes frames from the same silk, but takes a thicker, more colourful ornament to balance the painting which is usually simple and not overcrowded.

But the background can also be considered a frame.

A Persian places his figures on a carpet ornament, a Japanese on an empty background. Here emptiness serves as a frame, then a colourful band goes around - the real frame, then there are sticks on the top and bottom, then the wall, so in this case we are dealing with double, triple frames; one frame is placed inside another.

## SCULPTURE

### *Principle of leaning\* In three-dimensional sculpture*

(\* The author apologises for the metaphorical terminology to which he is forced to resort. This principle could be described as the principle of reliance on the material, adaptation to the material, dependence on the material and so on and so forth. But the author does not intend to establish a strict terminology, neither does he use the sometimes unintelligible slang of artists but wishes to find out the principles of texture in vivid examples.)

The texture created by nature should be recognised as the most arbitrary; man instead alters material purposefully, subordinating it to his wishes and creating his own forms and texture.

In America, Guatemala, Florida and other countries we come across many stone sculpture the texture of which I would want to single out.

A block of stone is taken and transformed into a likeness of man or animal by a few skilful moves. The overall shape of the stone remains almost unchanged, all the forms of a human or animal body and their movements are subordinated to the shape of the stone, some forms break out or hide in the stone; sometimes only a few necessary lines are scratched to bring the stone to life.

The saying is true that when people fall into silence, stones will speak. This example shows that an artist did not impose foreign forms on a stone, only those that could be given without destroying the impression of the mass of stone.

Wooden sculptures of recent times which we find on Rapa-nui island are often bow-shaped. The reason for this is that there are almost no trees on the island and the sculptures were made solely from old boats, mostly bow-shaped. And even though the islanders were skilful in pottery and had sharp obsidian knives, it never occurred to them to impose new diametrically opposed forms on the initial ones. Here the material and its shape provided a ready general outline.

Ancient people made statuettes from mammoth teeth, deer and horse bones, and because of the hardness of the material or primitiveness of instruments, ancient craftsmen 'leaned' on the shape of the material, so the form was predetermined by the essence of the material.

In absolutely the same way in Gothic art we often see how the shape of ivory influenced the composition.

So often the shape of the material directly prompts some forms and prohibits others.

On the other hand, unbridled naturalism neutralises the material. After all, monumentality amounts to saving the material, its bulk, if it has such.

The purpose is not to break it or bore holes but rather come out of it, adjust to it; slide along it, proceed sparingly..

If you take Egyptian stone sculptures of older periods, you will see that they attempt to produce the impression of a general mass: there is no span between legs and arms, everything is connected by stone, shapes and masses shine through, in a word the general texture is more beautiful than in later sculptures where the bulk was broken through, the eye has to jump over emptiness, i.e., spans, in order to reach the mass again; the impression of a mass of stone was fully destroyed, we already have a human figure with parted legs - and there is no longer any mystical texture of 'leaning' against simple masses and shapes.

In decorative sculpture we often see such a leaning against given shapes.

The figures on capitals in Vézelay follow the shape of the capitals themselves and do not protrude to the extent of harming the columns.

### *Principle of simple and geometrical masses in three-dimensional sculpture*

In addition to the conventional dependence on given masses prompting the shape of a certain order, we have texture independent of the shape of the material. Here we invent the main shapes, which are no longer destroyed by details.

In their depictions of man, primitives resort to the simplest basic forms.

We find idols in the shape of pillars, their heads approaching a sphere, a cone with all parts of the body extremely simplified.

For instance, in African art some idols are made tall as poles, with only the head and buttocks being hinted at by spherical forms; the harmony of these simple forms, architectural pillars, is observed and explanatory details are added later.

The excavations of Ephesian monuments have led to the discovery of sculptures in which the basic shape is common, universal, for instance, a block, a column; a woman sculpture leans with all its forms against a cylinder with nothing sticking out of it, her arms are lowered, the hair and everything follows the main form - a cylinder.

In Florida there are many sculptures falling into understandable, energetic and simple masses; some parts of the body are altogether absent: for instance, the stomach and neck are absent, the bosom is directly followed by legs. In the process of carving much is simplified, i.e., dropped out; for example, the amount of hair or number of wrinkles is unimportant. A human figure is sometimes made by a few lines; that is why we do not notice when important parts of the body, natural parts of the universe are absent for the benefit of the plastic idea.

### *Principle of introducing planes in three-dimensional sculpture*

(This principle was also noticed by Frobenius in his works on African sculpture. See Band 7, Publ. des K.Etnogr. Mus. zu Dresden).

Among many peoples (Eskimos, Negroes) planes are deliberately introduced into round sculpture as a foundation for further forms.

I am working on a special paper on the significance of this principle and its manifestations in the arts of different peoples. The question is interesting because in some arts the plane is the only way of expressing creative thought and achieves high aesthetic value, while among other peoples this principle is absolutely unknown.

Some lines and forms, for instance, cheeks, eyes, lips and chin are placed on this fundamental plane while the forehead, eyebrows, nose are lifted to a new plane.

This principle was upheld by tradition for a very long time and it can still be traced in sculptures made already under European influence.

In Byzantine sculptures we see the further development of these principles as well as older forms, partly the above-mentioned.

Many Madonnas made according to the Byzantine principle have survived in the Abruzzi; they are marked by 'speculative' texture, 'speculative' ups and downs, forward and backward movements of agglomeration, planes, the lengthening and shortening of shapes, etc. For instance, the head of a Madonna, big and round, seems to protrude, while other parts of her body are greatly moved backward, her arms sink in backward planes, the head of Christ is a little spherical, all the rest is subdued, killed, flat, the important things are stressed, the less important removed. One even wants to say that the principle is the same as in Byzantine poetry, in hymns where everything is based not on the rhythm but on the accent, on ups and downs.

This intentional advancement and retraction of forms is, though, a very ancient principle which stood strong for millennia and was reborn in Byzantium. In excavations in Asia Minor, in Ephesus dating back to the 8th century B.C., in the Ephesian temple of Artemis as well as in excavations in Nimrud, we find ivory figures in which the same advancement and retraction of mass are noticeable. The skill in applying the principle in the Ephesian findings is such that one can easily say that it had been known long before or borrowed from other, Far Eastern, countries.

And whether you like it or not, the play of ups and downs is a universal law. In the costumes of all ages we see efforts to lift folds and play with them.

Fashion designers "contrary to reason and the elements" create new masses in clothes, ups and downs that in most cases do not correspond to the actual structure of the human frame or the person in question (crinolines, tight waistlines, elevated busts, etc.) The position and correlation of speculative ups, downs and masses alter together with changing fashions.

Even in Gothic sculptures we can discover traces of the Byzantine principle of ups and downs in the folds of the clothes.

It will be clear now that planes and elevations created by reason are incompatible with the ones created by nature; the two worlds worship different gods and war against each other.

Rodin said once that sculpture is an art of cavities and humps. It would be good if his words were understood in their full sense; but Rodin is also realistic, natural in his transitions from deep to tall and from tall to deep, there is nature, chance but no sculpture.

The art of Negroes and North Asian peoples offers a broad field for studying 'speculative' play with the elevation and lowering of planes.

#### BAS-RELIEF

Let us take a closer look at bas-reliefs. Here we are given one basic plane and a play of curvatures on it.

But the bas-reliefs where realistic figures lean against the plane have no special play of planes or elevations. Realistic figures look glued to planes in an arbitrary way, elevations are possible and permissible only within the anatomy of the depicted figures. Therefore the texture of such bas-reliefs is absolutely arbitrary and uninteresting.

#### *Principle of 'Leaning' in bas-relief*

A certain liking for a freer texture, but related to irregular forms of the material, can be discovered already in prehistoric art. In the caves of France and Spain where paintings, drawings and sculptures of the 20th millennium B.C. have been discovered, we find that bas-reliefs on the walls are in conditional dependence on the rough surface of the walls. Chaotic protrusions in the walls were used for shaping the heads of men and animals.

#### *Principle of 'speculative' rises in bas-reliefs*

A more heedful attitude to the plane and its rises can be discovered in Augustan and Empire styles; here one already feels a certain calculation in decorating the plane with rises; baroque is also 'speculative' at times - here we have a deliberate inflation of reliefs.

There are cases when the practice of life makes us plan all the rises and falls and co-ordinate them with the main plane. Thus in decorating tombstones, especially those covering church floors, we must have the skill of livening up the plane with elevations; know what deserves and requires elevation and what does not; bulging noses, stomachs or other actual outlines are impossible - they would obstruct walking and what is more important they would destroy the nature and decorative notion of the flatness of the stone and floor. The art of striking medals must also take into account the basic form of a medal.

But love for planes, a search for illustrative and decorative rises resulted in intentional conventions developed by school and tradition.

The capitals of St Sophia Cathedral are intentionally flat, but festive; their foliage has lost its own relief and reality; decorative, diagonally located planes and rises appear.

Here is another simple example to demonstrate how rises and falls can be harmonised in bas-reliefs.

Take a Tver honey cake representing a female figure made according to an ancient form. If you look at the cake sideways, you will see all the important, fundamental rises; the skirt part protrudes most, then comes a basket with the hands holding it; as a general mass it is firmly separated from the protrusion of the entire skirt; then comes the third fall - the face which almost merges with the main surface. The entire bas-relief has the shape of a small wedge, one end of which is thinner and the other gradually thickens. The head represents the beginning, almost merging with the main surface, as we have already said. This gradual, strengthening rise is a 'speculative' way of playing with protrusions, thinking in terms of ornaments. If we look at the cake en face, we will see how each of the parts is interpreted. Take, for instance, the skirt. It is free from the rise and fall of folds, the chaos of accidental reliefs; the entire skirt is flat with only one protruding sphere representing a button. The eye registers and admires these two separate protrusions: the skirt and button. The same applies to the breast; there is only a vague play of protrusions that simultaneously lead to the last outstanding part, i.e., the head. The latter is almost flat, but in line with the general declivity the chin sticks out more than the forehead, and the chin and lips protrude more than the

nose. The nose is at the same height as the cheeks and is separated from them with furrows which are sufficient to represent the nose. The streaming hair framing the head follows the same tendency, i.e., the closer to the forehead, the lower.

It is also remarkable that in this case the special form of the wedge is not accidental; the artist chose it deliberately because in a bas-relief it symbolically conveys the impression of the cone of a female figure in a dress.

## ARCHITECTURE

### *Materials*

Now a few words about architecture. What was said about sculpture applies here too. The same rich use of materials. Houses are built from a great variety of materials of different structure and processed in different ways. In one and the same building we find a rough foundation outside, then rustic, then smooth walls up to shining copper roofs and chimneys; all this can be described as bronze, stone, clay, metal paintings.

### *Non-Material Texture*

But the texture of a house, its 'noise', is also created by arches, planes, depressions, windows, profiles, its style. These porticoes, doorways, buttresses, columns, balconies, stairways irritate our eye. The same applies inside: whether it be the long halls of basilicas or a diminishing row of vaults and intersecting arches, pilasters of Byzantine churches - they all provide different textures. Size, height, colour, wealth, poverty - all these factors influence texture.

### *Principle of 'leaning' in architecture*

Architecture also leans against surroundings, the entire material at its disposal and its forms.

In Assisi a hill is used for a church: one passage below the hill, another on the hill. The same in Siena. There is a giant rock used as a temple on Java. In towns in the mountains, houses cling to the hills and rocks. The town of Trevi has a strictly conical shape because the mountain is a cone. The walls of houses and churches are formed by irregular planes, mountain slopes; this can also be discovered in the Abruzzi, in the Apennines.

Buildings also often owe their material to the locality, which results in covert 'leaning' in forms sometimes alien to nature. For instance, the red lime of the Jura which penetrates fields, waters and roads gives the red material for buildings.

### *Principles of basic forms and 'speculative' elevations*

Architecture has the same play of planes, the same basic planes, basic masses to which smaller planes and masses are attached, the same basic spaces, cavities that are the foundation and central idea of the entire structure.

In Greece we see cubes and a cult of equal angles. In Byzantium - domes, ups, downs and intersections. In Gothic art a cone and an abundance of spires.

### *Light*

In architecture light as an important factor producing a specific texture also has to be taken into account.

Hollows are distributed, so as to make other hollows and prospects visible. Light might suddenly break out from somewhere or hide, stubbornly hit the eye for a long time; it is a fact that even the position of one window can give a building or a church a pleasant or unpleasant 'noise'.

### *One material enslaving another in architecture*

The influence of atmosphere, mist, the sun, which alters things so much by its light or reflections, a moonlit night, rains, dawns and dusks, all these temporary and continuously changing covers transform architecture, as varnish alters a painting.

### *Frame*

Architecture can also have varying frames. In winter, when all horizontal planes are covered with snow, horizontal hollows appear and all vertical planes start playing, retracting; in this way trees get a strong energetic frame.

Architecture is rich in such frames. The white, finely carved marble tower in Pisa lies peacefully on a green lawn, in silence outside the town. In general, architecture often has a wonderful frame whether it is the sky, a square in front of a building or surrounding it, or emptiness, or variegation.

## TECHNIQUES OF NATURE

### *Texture born of organic necessity*

From the beginning of time nature has been processing all materials and creating textures. Organic life on earth is a chaos of constantly changing textures. Nature has its special, permanent technique in developing these textures. What is created by organic and non-organic nature amazes us, of course; it furnishes amazing wonders but it has been creating them from ancient times in the same ways and in the same direction.

Nature is an enemy of simple form; it has been producing and will reproduce one and the same complicated form. A bee makes the same honeycombs, trees have the same leaves, the atmospheric phenomena and feelings are the same; the same optic colours and lights; the same movements, the same textures. As all this production is an inherent organic necessity; from this point of view Tolstoy must be right in saying that there is no place for art on earth.

#### *Nature, the imitator*

But probably in one direction nature could be called an artist. We have corals that look like monkeys. One can even find groups that look, for instance, like St George fighting the dragon with the dragon having several heads and a serpentine body.

Quarries have given us images of birds, animals, portraits of historical personalities. Tree roots and branches give devils, elves and nymphs.

But evidently such a playful mode of nature also has its-own 'noise' differing from the handwriting of man. How else can we explain to ourselves the numerous attempts to imitate nature? We have sculptors who create a so-called play of nature or at least strengthen or emphasise it.

A suitable material is chosen for it, such as old marble, mossy agate etc and subjected to chemical processing. A turner from Regensburg, Martin Teibner, was once famous for such work.

#### *Nature as creator of ornaments*

But maybe nature is a wonderful stylist, a maker of ornaments?

Frost enchants us with ornaments covering our windows, spiders spread ornaments in corners, lower sea organisms have ornamental forms. The passages and corridors a woodworm bores under the bark form such beautiful ornaments that it was suggested at an exhibition (in Budapest in 1906) that such worms should be trained for industry. However, it is unlikely that all the above-mentioned artists could be tamed and taught to create ornaments to the bidding of man.

#### *Nature as creator of 'new' and 'old' textures*

There is one more circumstance thanks to which 'nature' is a creator of a whole number of textures, namely, nature has a strong physical and chemical, destructive effect on materials, stronger than the human hand. Even our chemists are not always able to blow stone so as to make it look like a sponge, a cork. Nature goes further, turning everything into dust in the final account, but there are times when the texture of decay makes the material very pleasant.

We like old marble - black, green, cracked; old, strange monuments from Costa Rica made of indistinguishable material. A Chinese bell found on the river bed after lying there for 3,000 years, seems enhanced with a rich texture of oxides, cracks, sediments, etc.

Nature has the same influence on textures created by the human hand. Our paintings lose colour, crack and darken. Nature is merciless, it is our enemy and in order to keep the initial texture, we have to protect our creations, our pearls, by various cunning inventions.

So thanks to nature, we can establish two types of texture for the human eye: new and old. The noise of the old one stems from 'the patina of time', which implies any change caused by light, air, a layer of dust, humidity, going hand in hand with the wear and tear of the surface. We love equally the noise of new and old texture.

Many engage in imitating 'the patina'. New carpets and curtains are literally covered with dust; new bronze is processed with acids till it takes on the look of ancient finds.

#### HUMAN TECHNIQUES

Unlike natural techniques, our whole life, our surroundings with their forms, our houses, streets, pictures, etc. are textures created by man, absolutely different textures.

Everything man does belongs to two worlds: the world of technology and the world of art. These are two strange, endless worlds; and each of them begs to be allowed at the helm of the other. They cannot be absolutely independent of each other. We see that many outstanding works of art are created with the poorest technology and in wonderful and rich technologies we can hardly find elements of art. These two worlds are hostile to each other at times and help each other at others; but in any case technology is a factor which always has to be taken into account in developing textures.

Symbolically speaking, technology as a whole is the mysterious instrument which is used to achieve art.

Man chooses as material something that is more or less stable, does not change organically, something he can change at will and so create forms. By touching them with his spirit and hand he makes these materials grow and change according to absolutely new laws, not laws of nature.

#### *School and Tradition*

When we touch material with our spirit, we develop our senses, our reason, the technique of thinking. By this technique I imply resourcefulness, the ability to use given means, foresee effects, composition, school and so on.

I want to stress here that school and tradition have played a major role at all times; there is no technique of thinking, no art without them. Give present-day natives in Africa or Oceania living under European influence the best instruments, but they will not make the idols their forefathers used to make in ancient times. They do not know anything, they cannot do anything; they have lost everything their

forefathers inherited from prehistoric times, from times lost for us but which still had art and technologies and brought up generations. The same can be said about Russian peasants and their icon-painting arts.

'The noise' of ancient primitivism and its texture is not 'a noise' of artlessness.

#### Manual Techniques

In touching material with his hands (the word can be understood in a wider sense) man attempts to convey his inner feelings through visible forms. This prompts the need for a special technique suitable for implementing all orders from superior impulses. One man easily acquires methods and rapidly finds forms which satisfy him, another in painful struggle helplessly looks for them and often remains mute, even though there should be heaven and happiness in his soul.

Naturally for this reason many find it necessary to develop this method of conveying ideas by practising 'hand' movements.

And then we see that some are constantly training, trying to keep the brush in their hands all the time, speak, sing, carve all the time in the hope of becoming omnipotent. A liking for purely technical tricks, technical death-defying leaps appears.

But technologies differ. One can create artistic values, another can be a burden, an empty phrase.

Which of them creates artistic values? The one that exists for its own sake, i.e., a technology for the sake of technology creating textures alien to nature.

As techniques, tricks can serve to convey reality, copy actual effects and textures, and are generally subordinate to realism; such obedience cannot create new artistic values.

We love the texture of icons and are surprised by the diversity of techniques used for achieving it. The technique known as *Asis* consists of the following procedures. Onion juice is applied to paintings to liven them up with very fine brushes. The brushwork is absolutely unnoticeable to the eye; then gilt is applied to those places and sticks to the fresh brushwork. Experienced painters easily achieve fine straight lines which an inexperienced person cannot produce even with the help of a magnifying glass.

The same can be said about simplifying procedures. Nowadays icons are covered with-drying oil in ordinary rooms; in the old days this was done in hot baths, so that the oil would flow in an even layer, etc.

#### Machine techniques

A new factor influencing textures created manually has appeared, that is machine processing.

At first it hides behind an instrument, say a knife; then a machine-tool appears, then the tool is developed, hidden natural energy is used for its construction; at the moment we are surrounded by so much machine noise, hand-made textures are driven out on a growing scale, their worlds are constantly shrinking.

So far machines have created surrogates of what can be done by hand.

But on the other hand we see that in some cases man is unable to do what a machine does; there are some natural materials and energies which do not surrender to us, which we cannot shape the way our minds require.

This can be seen everywhere. Take a *kotelok* hat as an example. Its shape and texture are created by the mind, technical processing of raw material and machine performance.

So one cannot deny elements of art and beauty in textures created by machines.

Futurists feel this new beauty as having nothing in common with hand-made textures.

The beauty of mechanical movement cannot destroy the beauty of the movements of hands, dancing, of course; the beauty of texture produced by a machine or apparatus will not oust the charms of hand-made textures, of course.

Two worlds with different dialects are established.

The fact that many people dislike mechanical textures and that they are valued less than hand-made can be attributed to the fact that even though they are generated with close human involvement, it is done with the help of a new slave, i.e., forces of nature.

So we are looking at the texture of nature as an ideal machine uncontrolled by us, the texture created by man and finally texture created by machines invented by man.

Thanks to machines, many manual techniques have been totally lost to us. Painting on parchment vanished with the invention of book-printing.

Colour photography, 'artistic' lenses for portraits create a strong threat to manual techniques and with the further development of this equipment, many second-rate artists, portrait-painters and painters of nature will lose their *raison d'être*, their halo, and such a purification of art from craftsmanship will be another achievement of mechanical technology.

The East with its cheap manpower has preserved some techniques that are impossible in our economic position. For instance, the production of thick carpets, varnished boxes, miniatures and many other labour-consuming textures which used to exist in our country in the past as well.

A common tendency is appearing in art nowadays: of losing textures achieved through painstaking efforts. The hastiness of life, the intrusion of machines offering their accurate work in abundance have developed their own careless texture - the texture of the slapdash. And it must be said that many artists work quite painstakingly to produce in the final account the impression of instant and careless slapdash. Such noise, such textures often escape the eye of a layman, of course.

#### Imitation

We have established the relationship between natural texture and man-made texture. Now it would be interesting to single out certain elements of our psyche influencing the formation of artistic texture.

I can imagine how in dull times one of our forefathers accidentally yawned, many followed him involuntarily; imitated the yawn, tried to do the same for some reason.

Could it be that such imitation resulted in the appearance of dialects, all arts, schools and traditions, this helpless yawn continues to reign



to this day; this is our prison, our evil, our goodness and joy. What many people do all their lives is yawn after their neighbours; others willing to overcome this general aptitude try to deliberately awaken the intellect, follow the thorny road from imitation to conception, to creation.

As love for texture is inherent in us, we naturally demonstrate in the first place a tendency to imitate nature which has a ready developed texture, while man has nothing and he has to create everything himself.

Will we succeed in that? Practice has shown that in some cases a certain illusion is possible, especially where nature itself readily provides us with its energies: in cinematography, phonograph, mirrors, lenses; all of them produce a more or less accurate imitation of certain aspects of nature.

*One material imitating another*

Then we notice that one material can be imitated by another, especially when there is a chance to work with many materials.

Celluloid energetically imitates ivory, even the pattern of its structure; celluloid painted pink imitates coral. Such deceptive textures are endless in modern handicrafts. One can even say that every material is trying to intrude into the realm of another.

Still it is strange that nowadays, when there are such great possibilities for developing new, good textures, they are so few; all creative efforts are concentrated, not on the study of individual beauties of new materials, but on the imitation of old, recognised, familiar textures; thus instead of satisfaction one feels unhappiness.

But, as always, in this case imitation is the first step on the road to beauty.

In plastic arts one material is constantly imitated by another, of course.

In architectural facades we often see much stone and marble though actually there is nothing of the kind; bricks are made of wood, stone of tin, the capitals of columns from pressed paper, etc.

In sculpture we know only Venus in the Vatican with clothes of tin imitating marble.

There are mosaics that look like marble and stone, but made of plaster, glass and glue water. We also know enamels consisting of various surrogates.

In the fine arts there are paintings, copies that are actually photos pasted on canvas, painted with oils and covered with varnish. We have drawings printed with the help of zinc plates described as prints from old wood engravings, etc.

But where paint and colour are actively used, deceptive imitations are endless and their success is more considerable. Natural charms are represented by false panoramas that manage to link a realistic foreground with a flat background. In the theatre all props are made of wood and papier-maché.

*One material imitating many*

In the fine arts we have homogeneous materials.

Take painting; you paint so, we are often told, as to convey the feeling of body, the foreground so that the texture of wood, water, air, sunlight, feeling are felt.

Is that possible? The reference of Denner, whose portraits represent even skin pores, to Velazquez, who painted even the sweat on faces, is not convincing, because the life of nature is not portrayed and the imitation is incomplete, and only if you are threatened by a fist can you imagine that all this is nature.

The texture gives the artist away because my colour agent in oils always seems to me absolutely different from the corresponding optic hue in nature!

The same in sculpture: a sculptor makes men and animals, the sky and landscape from one and the same stone; he carves everything of wood, even the tree itself, living, not chopped.

In dance, by movements of arms and legs we sometimes imitate the movements of animals, human beings or plants.

*Symbolic imitation*

But why do we imitate, if it is clear that one material cannot create a full illusion of other different materials?

As this is a question of imitation, the explanation is the following. The surface of paint, of course, cannot convey the surface of a tree, but something of equal value, a symbol, a synthesis of the surface of a tree. This will be a symbolic painting capable of conveying the idea of an object. The necessity or liking for such painting sometimes results in artistic metaphors and can create plastic beauty under known conditions.

For instance, in depicting a lion, an artist might have to choose what he wants to imitate in nature: only the outward shape of the lion, or its life, energy, strength. This example alone shows that the symbols used in imitations can differ. If you take a bronze Chinese or Assyrian lion, you will see that despite the free, unrestricted imitation of the general forms of a live lion, despite the intricacy of forms, ornaments and inlays, this dead stone lion can be much more lifelike than a live lion. If you compare them, you might conclude that a live lion is dead; the eyes of the man-made lion shine more, its movements are more dynamic, the skin is smoother, the hair is curlier, it is bigger and more frightening, in a word, it reproduces the life we would want to convey and which a slavish imitation of outward forms does not produce.

In general care for accurate recording of the outside forms, an object disappears for the benefit of imitating some experienced effect born of the object. Moreover, as the relevant illusion of the object can be achieved by simple means, sometimes several blots and lines are enough to create the illusion or image of a tree.

China requires that the painter depict mountains so that they would seem to breathe. Of course, this is a poetic requirement to make poetic mistakes. Depict water so that it would seem that it rustles like silk, find symbolic signs conveying the texture of water and silk.

*Imitation of oldness*

There are cases when imitation is out of place, when it is a mockery and hopelessly destroys created beauty, when it is an unpleasant fake, a cheap superficial deception.

In our times nobody is able to work so that he could not be distinguished from the spirit of the age he depicts. Even a hand-made tracing from frescos does not approach the original; we do not believe it; in certain cases we trust only photos.

In restoring churches, for instance, the impression of oldness is being imitated, but attempts fail, the texture of ancient times cannot be copied. There was no such liking in the old days. In general there are few churches created by just one age and not spoiled by the styles of other ages.

In Notre-Dame in Paris one door bears the spirit of Byzantium, another is Gothic.

We come across Gothic churches with plentiful additions and restorations in baroque and rococo.

There are frescos of several centuries in San Marco in Venice.

Now when a church begins to crumble, it is fully reconstructed according to the old designs, but the reconstruction is poor.

The San Marco tower in Venice was built anew but its texture was not restored. As a joker said, it would have been better to build the tower of wood and paint it to look old, if someone wanted to restore the lost shape of the tower.

Imitation is especially unpleasant when you see that the imitator is absolutely unfamiliar with the old principles of art.

All styles are being spoiled now; we imitate Egypt, Persia and other styles, often freely mixing them.

A national handicraft exhibition as arranged in St Petersburg in 1913: all the works of craftsmen made under the instruction of teachers at this exhibition seemed to be made in the spirit of Old Russia; Russian primitivism seemed to be on the surface, but in reality, in essence that was Western Europe, Vienna Secession, etc.

I understand that primitive Russias can be at the heart and Western Europe on the surface. But here, with minor exceptions, everything was the other way round.

#### *Love for material*

An artist's taste is manifested in his choice of material. But taste is an inherited matter; whole hordes have the same taste and a national taste can be discovered in a people of one race and this people finds it difficult to understand the taste of another people.

Only an impartial comparison of the tastes of many peoples provides the chance of establishing which organ is more developed in a specific nation and which nation is developing its taste more consciously and richly.

An artist from New Zealand, an aborigine, was once ordered to make a boat; when it was ready he started decorating it with mad spirals in keeping with the school of his country. He was offered good European paints for the purpose. The savage was not tempted by refined tones, categorically refused to take them, even mocked them and painted the boat with his folk, natural paints. Maybe the European paints were more perfect, but the primitive artist could not achieve with them what he wished; the noise of those paints was alien to him; he had a taste developed by tradition which he did not want to give up to please foreigners. If he had been an ordinary unskilled barbarian he would have senselessly and unconsciously grabbed the paint.

An artist must undoubtedly have a deep knowledge of and love for the material with which he wants to express his feelings. Only laymen believe that a great artist can do anything he wishes with any material.

Unfortunately nowadays this love for the material and joy in texture has been lost.

Now we have a common, international established taste recognising this and rejecting that. Who developed this levelling taste? This was done by our school. Thanks to our consistent school we deviated from art and lost traditions.

In schools drawing is at the service of science; with the help of drawing we should study the laws of nature, the anatomy of man, optics, physics, perspectives.

And even that does not seem to be enough and there are hopes of introducing the American method of teaching drawing everywhere, i.e., simply apply drawing to solving mathematical tasks, studying botany, zoology, history, psychology, etc.

Our schools will nip art and love for it in the bud as long as barriers are built between art, science and nature.

So national texture, a simple, naive love for the native material is being destroyed by international methods of teaching art.

Many people are indifferent to material textures, their creative tasks lie in the sphere of non-material textures. What do I care about the hue and nature of ochre, if I must accurately convey the shape of a muscle?

But the history of art teaches us that there used to be whole epochs that cultivated a love for the material, the surface texture of a work of art.

#### SURFACE

##### *Surface of painting*

If we look at a painting only as a painted canvas without paying any attention to the symbolic signs that should be understood by us, we will be dealing only with the surface of the painting, the texture of the surface.

That is when the need will inevitably appear to get from the material its best worlds, discover its secrets. In this case we will have to take into account the structure, shine and certain other qualities of material, manner, technique and similar factors.

We touch the surface of a painting with our eyes already from a distance and rejoice at its colours, evenness or any other qualities.

Old paintings are transparent; the lower plane and material shine through; such are those of the East, China, Japan, old Byzantium.

On the other hand we have late Egyptian art where paintings are thick. Fayum portraits found on mummies and now displayed in a museum in Berlin resemble in technique portraits by Frans Hals or Rembrandt; the same formation of the brow and nose, the same colours, the same overlay and thickness of brushwork. This method is very wide-spread throughout the West, it is approved by European academies today.

In old times more attention was paid to timbre, the surface; now little attention is paid to this aspect of painting. The surface of icons is 'smelted', compressed, deep, resembling enamel. One can also come across 'misty' icons. In China painting is flowing: it pours like a waterfall or brook. In pointillist works, dots of paint barely cover the canvas; in modern painting the surface generally has the nature of a bas-relief - the canvas resembles a ploughed field, the foreground is thicker and the background is thinner, evening it out.

It is unthinkable to copy the texture of an old painting with its effects, tarnish, cracks, dimness and other accidental phenomena. A study of the state of the texture helps us distinguish the original from the most accurate copy, we distinguish a colour reproduction from a painting, a good engraving from a bad one or from a lithograph.

I find the division of paints into finely rubbed and poorly rubbed seems strange to me; the latter are always considered superior. I personally do not understand at all how one can take a Meves ochre No.2 in the conviction that this finely rubbed colour can meet all my needs.

If we do not pay attention to the nature of the colour agent more carefully, we will repeat one and the same timbre for the nth time.

In order to alter the nature of a paint even the least bit, many use plaster or casein as an undercoat for a canvas.

Can the tone itself be beautiful without any influence of the texture of the material? That is impossible.

The texture of a paint is responsible for harmony or the absence of harmony.

The sharpest, most different tones, the strongest contrasts suddenly combine. How does this happen? The same softness, tenderness, purity, freshness or dryness, sadness indicates that paints are linked by one and the same harmonious texture.

On the other hand, I imagine that it is possible to make a painting from one of the same red, colourful tones but in different textures of the tone.

We have few colours with basic textures; our texture is produced by Meves on oil, that is why our painting has no 'skeleton'.

Modern painting has lost many interesting materials and colour agents which used to be used to create the surface texture. I will mention the gold and silver loved by the Orient. Naturally such a crude material is unfit for conveying 'air'. Other dull or acid agents such as caput mortuum, Prussian blue, etc, do not serve the purpose.

Several words remain to be said about cases when the surface of a picture is painted thickly and unevenly, producing the impression of a bas-relief. According to Academy rules this is done in the following way: the sky, for instance is painted evenly while the moon on it is painted thickly to stand out. If a sunlit landscape is painted, thick brushwork and a thick overlay of paint come to the foreground and the parts of the picture where spots of sunlight should be; sometimes overlays of paint are formed by accident. All these outstanding points, blots of impossible thickness, of course, strictly correspond to definite objects in nature, but they are absolutely accidental with regard to the surface of a picture and the elevations are absolutely unmotivated.

Once I happened to see a picture of a graveyard painted especially to produce the effect of a bas-relief. The picture was thickly painted with an excess of oil. The middle and backgrounds were also thick. Trees and crosses were energetically drawn everywhere, either by relief or the impressions of the brush into the general dough so that in the foreground the trunk of a tree was deeper than the general surface of the oily dough. The entire surface of the picture seemed to be ploughed by furrows and waves and this waviness contained love; as far as lustre was concerned, the surface of the picture gave a rich impression because an abundance of furrows, their crossings, made the oil glimmer, shine and fade.

At times a beautiful bas-relief surface is provided by time.

We like old, cracked frescos, a peeling icon, sometimes absolutely unintelligible.

Reynolds went so far as to make the following philosophical statement: cracked paintings are the most pleasant.

505

#### *Surface of sculpture*

The same can be said about sculpture

Take a fragment of a statue; it can be beautiful even though severely damaged by time, even though limbs or head may be absent.

Could this be the explanation for the love and imitation of some sculptors who create figures without legs, heads and hands, only torsos resembling those found in excavations after lying underground for centuries.

#### *Siccative*

But we also know another type of connoisseur of old textures. A good friend of mine, a fellow from the countryside, found an ancient copper jug in the earth, colourful, glittering with various hues and particles of oxides; he did not like the jug that way, took it, rubbed it properly and covered it with silver on siccative.

The same is done in museums of history, archaeology, war: old cannons are covered with black varnish, the prows of ships are painted anew into some colour; in a word, everything is put in order with the help of siccatives and paint.

Siccatives are a nightmare of our age.

Almost our entire surroundings are covered with siccatives; everything has been levelled by this gluey surface: stoves, doors, walls, furniture, etc; practical considerations do not permit or destroy other textures.

#### *Icon cleaning*

But what should we think of icon cleaning?

Artists have already split into two hostile camps, furiously attacking each other over this matter.

One side evidently finds nothing interesting in dark icons, wishes to see them cleaned, in their original form they want all the tarnish, layers of paint, sometimes painting subjects absolutely different from the initial layer, they admire the purity and brightness of colours appearing from under the dirty layer of drying oil and soot.

The other considers that it is premature to clean icons.

So little has been done in this sphere, the study and interest in icons are so new; the restoration experts themselves still differ over certain techniques of restoration.

For instance, cleaned icons are now covered with polish (this information was kindly provided by the restorer and collector Mr.M.Kurilko, who will publish his studies in the near future); this has been practised only during the past five years and it has not been established how the polish will preserve an icon.

After cleaning, the colours of icons are fresh and bright, but already six hours later they begin to grow yellow: at first a separate spot begins, then everything becomes yellow; if other parts of an icon are cleaned, the last bit differs strikingly from the cleaned part. It is still not absolutely clear what causes this phenomenon: the gradual yellowing and later darkening.

In general, physicists and chemists should conduct longer experiments and work on such matters.

Despite the unfavourable conditions in which the icons were kept (soot, additional drawings) they have marvellously preserved the freshness and brightness of the original painting; this only goes to prove that drying oil served as a wonderful light filter, and one can only hope that polish will produce the same result, as it is going to be extremely difficult to remove polish from a tortured icon.

These differences in the camp of restorers are very important and it is important for the sake of protecting art to know which side is right and, in general to have more fundamental studies, otherwise we risk losing everything that has been cleaned.

There are, though, icons so darkened that one cannot see a thing; all the tones are absolutely dark and in such cases it is hard to keep from cleaning them; but then the removal of the upper layer is enough; if you examine a piece of drying oil through a microscope you will discover that only the upper layer is dark while the lower remains as fresh as new.

Of course, it is pleasant to discover fresh, bright lower layers, but first we could study the paints and their combinations in miniatures where their freshness is intact, where a foreign hand has not rewritten what was once painted; or limit oneself to only a few cleaned copies; the total cleaning of all icons is lightminded.

The cleaning of icons prompts very unpleasant questions. Who should be the judge in cleaning an icon; what should be removed, what should be left? Can the Academy be considered a fair judge? God forbid! Just think of the art it has filled our churches with. But nobody in either Russia or Western Europe has made aesthetic studies of icon-painting. Only in recent times have connoisseurs and some artists shown a certain interest in studying the artistic values of icon-painting and thank God if the latter will get down to work.

He who has dedicated all his life to art, he who after wandering through foreign art approaches icons, who finds more beauty in them than in any other paintings, only he can be indignant at the coolness of restorers in power, who stand so far away from this art.

Only one more thing can be said, that private collectors and scientists can engage in experiments, which is quite desirable, but if museums, churches, public staterooms are going to deal with this, if public property is going to be sacrificed for doubtful phantoms, it will be extremely sad! The task of such institutions should be narrowed, so that they only collect and protect valuables.

Even for this reason, in energetic cleaning the texture of an icon is lost for centuries; the process should be approached with care.

Cleaned icons seem scratched, as if they attempt to follow Western European painting; in a word, icons are disappearing.

I remember darkened St Georges with such a unique dark surface, such shimmering of brown and gold, dressed in gold and silver - you will never find such hues in either Rembrandt, Leonardo or Rivera.

#### CHOICE OF MATERIALS

506

In painting we deal with different materials and their combinations undoubtedly provide us with differing colour impressions; but the difference between the materials themselves (clay, copper, etc.) is not clearly felt by us in easel painting, materials seem to sink in the common binding material and mainly colour this common material, i.e., water, oil, etc.

But in the plastic arts we frequently deal simultaneously with several materials which do not lose their independence, but remain dominating elements in expressing artistic ideas. But probably one should not regard as a subject of serious study such a phenomenon in sculpture, for instance, when many materials are used simultaneously, as it was recognised a long time ago that such allegedly cheap taste is covered merely by handicrafts and it has been established that it is useful and permissible to express artistic ideas in just one material.

But just think of icons; they are decorated with haloes, shoulderbands, inlays, the painting itself with precious stones, metals, etc, all that destroys our modern concept of painting.

Think of one more circumstance, that paintings and sculptures especially in churches are covered with clothes, vestments, decorated with various materials.

It would seem that it is inappropriate and even unnecessary to speak of all that, let alone to defend it; we should sooner be surprised by the primitiveness and loss of the feeling of beauty by our ancestors.

Still I cannot do that. To justify myself I will try to find out what role the choice of materials plays in the life of peoples in general; simultaneously I will probably manage to defend these and other above-mentioned alleged absurdities and prove their aesthetic value and necessity.

#### *Selection of materials in nature*

We find a rich selection of materials in the world surrounding us. Birds, mountains, water and the rest give us an eternally changing arrangement; and if you travel to India, America, they say the sun, fauna and flora there are different... What else do you need? It is incomprehensible why we are not content with that! After all, in museums of natural science we are shown very naturally various stuffed animals among real grass, bushes and stones. One can show any country or place in such a way.

#### *Selection of materials in art*

But man is not content. He is not content with the repeating, the natural selection of materials. He wants to select them his own way.

Even Xerxes decorated his favourite trees, under which he strolled, with golden rings.

The Persian king Darius held his receptions under plane trees adorned with silver decorations, in a pavilion of gold decorated with grapevines of precious stones. The entire surroundings of Darius - tame lions, decorated elephants, tall guards in purple clothes and panther skins - had to create the impression of the splendour and might of the king, bring him closer to God.

With the noise of colour, the tone of materials, the choice of textures we attempt to bring the people to beauty, religion and God.

Of course, we feel a need to admire only one material fully, separating it from others, bringing out its hidden 'noises' and getting aesthetic pleasure in this way.

But there is in our soul an insurmountable desire to conflate a material with something alien; to combine it with other materials, and we recognise it as a success when an alien material blends well with the initial one.

At present we have developed a liking for several combinations we consider successful, for instance, wood and metal.

It is extremely difficult to combine them mechanically well and only very lately has this been achieved by our technology and now we are getting from industry a sober, solid and perfect texture of a selection of materials.

But there were times when we were more daring, and unheedingly combined for the sake of beauty materials that cannot be properly linked technically.

Think, for instance, of porcelain cups of Empire times, the bottom of which was made of glass.

The possible mechanical connection is unimportant for art.

Man collects and combines materials according to his own laws, and such a combination and such a new harmony are songs of a special order.

Every age had its own favourite sets of materials.

We often do not know whether materials are brought together by their surface texture, shape or other secret laws, but we feel the beauty emanating from such a set.

We take precious materials for necklaces and other decorations; but their exclusive use deprives us of many other beauties and harmonies.

Can we not use along with diamonds, pieces of coal, horn, mother-of-pearl, wood, iron, or should we be afraid of cheap materials and cheap taste?

These market-based associations degrade materials, block artistic ideas at work in combining the materials, their effects and textures.

In the age of baroque, people were not so shy and used materials without hiding under their intensive processing, or fearing any associations. Such materials as coconuts or horns were transformed into household utensils, framed with precious metals and decorated with stones; ostrich eggs were combined with porcelain and amber with insects buried in it.

We see even purer combinations free from daily associations but based on innocent direct joy in primitives.

Take, for example, masks, sculptures, dolls of primitive peoples made of different, random materials, wood, straw, seashells in which pieces of amber, glass, mica or a European button serve as eyes.

A Negro chief in Haiti, unfamiliar with associations reigning in Europe, gave orders to decorate the camps of his guards with the tin from sardine cans.

This mixing of materials is a favourite game of many peoples and one which gives birth to many forms of beauty.

We can be only amazed, I would say, by the audacity and boldness of approach to the crudest and cheapest materials, cheap contrasts in which every spot is out of tune, but which in the final account produces some secret harmony. And he is a true jeweller or artist who understands cheap materials too, and is capable of working with them.

We have lost many sets of simple materials, simple techniques.

Where has the art gone of decorating wooden church doors with giant nails, which used to be hammered to form ornamental patterns?

*Enslavement of one material by another*

But let us return to icons. Here we also see a rich selection of materials. We see paintings surrounded by metal plates which are again surrounded by paintings then again plates; we see icons decorated with paper flowers, beads, towels, lamps hanging in front of them with shimmering light and smoke.

More than that, icons have inlays of alien materials, stones, gold and silver reliefs; the paintings are partly or almost fully covered with metal mountings, halos, shoulder covers, etc.

When such combinations appear in our clothes we are not surprised and find them useful. Such outstanding examples sometimes also appear in handicrafts.

In museums we find old, finely carved chairs with an absolutely separate ornament of metal strips on top of the carving, that arbitrarily cover the carving; in them two artistic elements, two competitors struggle for existence, one attacks another; they take away from and give something to each other; this struggle creates a new texture, a new noise having nothing in common with either of the struggling components; here the resultant object can be considered a symbol of varnish, altering the texture like varnish.

As we know the Russian people paints its icons whether it is an image of God, the Virgin, saints or scenes in unrealistic forms, while the real world is introduced only by the selection and inlay of actual, tangible materials. This seems to represent the struggle of two worlds, the inner, unreal world and the outside tangible world. Even here the two worlds overlap, one world is covering, the other concealing; their combined texture gives us a piece of the mystical, i.e., symbolically arouses the understanding and feeling of new worlds and beauties.

In ancient times sculptures were decorated with inlays (eyes, hair, mouth, colour ornaments) and we know such examples in Egypt, Phoenicia, Assyria, China, Greece and the primitives of all possible peoples.

There is an icon in Kazanskii Cathedral in St Petersburg with a giant figure of a horseman, the golden relief of the horseman and the flat paintings of the picture are skilfully balanced by inner laws.

This relief should be distinguished from the reliefs we see, for instance, in pictures by Vivarini (b.1470) and which can be sooner called artificial. On those pictures we see flashes, thick brushwork, made sculpturally and gilded, we discover that all metal parts of clothes, even turbans and saddles protrude in places, but all these golden reliefs are accidental as far as the plane is concerned. Everything is linked mechanically but there is no feeling of a spiritual connection.

The choice of materials is an important factor that can give great pleasure, we see that when we study the poetry of different countries.

Let me quote a poem by Li Tai Po, one of the greatest Chinese poets of the Tang epoch. There is no deep philosophical thought in this work, there is only painting with materials.

*A dew-sprinkled stairway of white transparent jade is going up,  
And it reflects a full moon.  
All steps glimmer with moonlight.  
The queen in a long dress is walking up the stairs,  
And the playing dew moistens the hem of noble robes.  
She is walking to a pavilion in which beams of moonlight weave their cloth.  
She stops on the threshold visionless.  
Her hand slowly brings down a curtain of pearls  
And the wonderful stones fall  
Murmuring like a waterfall  
Pierced by sunbeams.  
And the queen listens to the murmur  
And sadly looks at the moonlight,  
The autumn moonlight shining through the pears  
And watches the moonlight long and sadly.*

*As we see here, the poet chooses softly shimmering materials covered with the moist shine of dew.*

This set of materials helps produce the special texture of shine which is out of reach of just one material.

If we get back to icons, we will notice that their very painting is rich in shine and glitter, but the introduction of metal mountings, haloes and shoulder stripes produce the richest combinations.

The effect of a darkly-painted head and halo of dark silver cannot be conveyed by any one material.

One can sacrifice the independent formal beauty of one material for the sake of new harmony.

That is why the clothing of entire figures in metal, cloth or other materials can be extremely valuable from the artistic point of view, if this is done by a skilful hand.

At the end of this chapter I would like to single out the findings of modern painters. Take Picasso for example. The artist glues old yellowed newspapers on the canvas and makes a drawing on them; he glues pieces of coloured posters, canvas with its unpainted side up, etc. Here it is also interesting to mention his technique of producing a surface, the beauty of canvas. In places he scatters amounts of paint mixed with sand on the even surface of a painting; he also sprinkles individual grains of sand covered with paint on the even surface, and then he literally polishes some other parts of a picture with varnishes.

One should also note a tendency among some futurists, mainly sculptors. They also offer quite a bold choice of materials. For instance, they glue real hair to the head, stick in glass eyes, combine a figure with pieces of wooden window frames with window-panes, iron bars, etc. But in choosing such materials these artists only wanted to arouse specific actual associations without thinking of any plastic idea, therefore such selections cannot be compared to the plastic selections inherited from ancient times.

508

#### tone quality

When material and non-material textures combine to produce a common 'noise', when both textures help each other create a certain quality of the noise which distinguishes it from many other 'noises' in one way or another, we get a 'noise' or texture with a certain tone quality.

In ordinary life a small, fat person immediately stands out of a crowd of people; the same applies to a tall, thin one. A person with a bit of everything is lost because the chaos of his merits does not produce a distinct tone quality.

Plutarch wrote that there are women who leave a faint and fragile imprint on our soul resembling tempera painting, but there are also those who create the impression of the burning and permanence of encaustic painting.

#### Unconscious tone quality

Every person has his own nature, of course, which is absorbed by the material used by this person as a creator, like a sponge.

The work of a child, woman or man can be guessed at in all the arts like handwriting; and we must recognise individuality as a factor which unconsciously gives a striking tone quality to creative work.

Travelling around the world, anyone can see that every people, every town, every village has its own tone quality, more or less definitely expressed.

Let us take Umbria as an example. As far as painting is concerned, it is absolutely evident that every village rich in frescos clearly differs from another in its *scuola locale*. Assisi, Gualdo Tadino, Cascia - how close they are to each other and how different! Cascia represents sandy, earthly tones, no transparent colours, crude, heavy peasant paintings, a clumsy outline - everything breathes the countryside, the cattle-shed, a simple and strong working life. Assisi is a town of religious ecstasy, the *scuola locale* (not Giotto) is different - clean; transparent, light, whitish hues; clear linear drawings - an angelic tone quality.

Gualdo Tadino. Everything is painted on golden backgrounds, fine handwriting, refinement, a fragment of opulent Byzantium and so on.

Let us recall the pygmies of Central Africa; their works reflect an extremely lively temperament, the entertaining, but at the same time horrifying vitality of these beings, the strength of their eye and micro-technical culture of their fingers.

In sculpture we will see strong and clear tone qualities.

How much power, weight and tension we see in Sassanid sculptures! And somewhat later Persian art, which is already delicate, intimate with its miniatures, carpets, etc.

History has demonstrated that a tone quality achieved by one people cannot be attained by another.

But why do we have such a monotonous tone quality in modern painting?

Now we find it difficult to guess or distinguish a nation by paintings. A French artist will paint Russian surroundings exactly the same as a Russian French surroundings - the tone qualities of their paintings will not give away their nation. From this we can conclude that other factors in addition to personality should play a major role in producing a tone quality.

Even the colour agents and materials in which a given locality is rich are responsible for a certain tone quality, texture a specific trace of these local schools.

How strange we find the tone of the interior of the old rural churches with floors made of ordinary red brick, walls covered with frescoes in red, the ceiling painted in caput mortuum - all such earthy tones in the texture of their surface.

In other areas the tone is different; for instance in Italy, you can see a cave church with one wall a crudely worked part of a rock, frescoes painted in indigo and ultramarine and the altar lit by daylight through a hole drilled in the rock.

The scarcity or monotony of materials, involuntary limitations in the choice of means for implementing plastic ideas, add their own tone quality to a work besides the will of a creator.

The unpainted houses in Italian towns, brown as cakes lying on the banks of emerald rivers, the wealth of green roofs in Moscow, red tile roofs in Gothic towns call all and serve as an example.

The combination of textures can also create a special tone quality.

In the Cathedral of the Annunciation in Moscow, in the area below the main dome, the floor is made of jasper, the walls are covered with icons to the very floor, paintings are dark, lamps, the glitter of stones, metal, dense tones of singing, basses in such perfect harmony with the dark icons.

The size of the material and work of art also play an important role in forming the tone quality.

A big cathedral and a small chapel differ in tone quality.

Let us think of a cherry stone in a Dresden museum on which 180 heads are engraved or sculptures of carriages driven in tandem by coachmen that go through the eye of a needle.

As a contrast to them, we have our stone idols or Egyptian monolith sculptures.

In the latter case, the material leads us to giants, to sizes far exceeding man as a unit of the world.

There were times, now gone, by which loved gigantic monuments; there are no longer giant stone figures, love of such a tone quality is lost. Once entire rocks and mountains slopes, not individual stones served as material (Egypt, Abu Simbel, Easter Island, China).

Big stone pictures of kings on Easter Island were cut right in the rock, artists benefited from the proportions created by nature; evidently such work with material resulted from love for giant dimensions.

But as soon as man learned to smelt bigger figures from bronze, then stone disappeared and so did enormous sizes.

As for the world of colours, here we have to recognise on the one hand a naive liking for flowers, for colour senses, on the other, arrogant restraint, pale sentimentality, cowardice, faintheartedness and colour fear.

How pleasant it must be to wear richly coloured silk, brocade in rich gay colours, instead of trying to make our suits black or neutral grey. Our towns, our streets, our clothes are grey. It sometimes happens that our home interior is in livelier tones but our towns remain dreary and sadly grey.

It is a well-known fact that when the heir to the throne of Britain visited the Maharaja of Jaipur, the latter ordered the main street to be painted pink in honour of the guest. I believe we would feel absolutely different, festive, if attention were paid to the colour element of city streets.

#### *Intentional tone quality*

So having learned certain elements capable of giving a general tone quality to textures, we can create them intentionally.

The artists in the villages in Italy whom we mentioned above, achieve tone quality unintentionally by accidentally selecting colour agents, materials, ways of processing them.

Modern artists must knowingly economise, and at times throw away from their rich palette many agents and colours, in order to form a particular gamut and tone quality.

By thoughtlessly mixing all God-given colour agents, we shall never achieve a specific tone quality. Naturally when one paints from nature copying nature, one has no time to pay attention to texture, the tone quality even less; generally speaking, during the ages when realism was out of favour, the feeling of texture developed and by contrast in times of realism the feeling was reduced to nothing.

Our academies are accustomed to criticise stiff or heavy, dry, cold and other the features of painting. In the final account, a tone quality common for all academies, and approved by them, results that levels the plastic works of art of all nations.

New art is trying to achieve knowingly what is strictly punished in educational institutions.

If an artist wants to get a tone quality of weight, toughness, etc., he should seek advice only from old art, only it can help him find out how this or that tone quality can be achieved. Nature will not help here.

The idea of form can be conveyed by any materials, but the idea of a tone quality only by a specific material and within specific limits.