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Representation of floral elements in the process of academic sculpture training and decorative plastics for small forms among future jewelry artists

Abstract. The article investigates the role of flora representation in the education of jewelry artists, emphasizing the significance of floristic motifs in academic sculpture and decorative plastic art for small forms to develop creative thinking and form an individual style. The importance of preliminary sketches and studies, analysis of plant structural features, depiction of their plastics and movement, as well as stylization of vegetal forms in jewelry art is analyzed. The interrelation between the content of disciplines such as “Academic drawing”, “Sculpture”, “Decorative plastic arts” and “Jewelry design projecting” is highlighted.

Keywords: academic sculpture, decorative plastic arts for small forms, floral elements, sculptural depiction of plants, volume, relief, composition, stylization, jewelry art.

The representation of floral elements in academic sculpture and decorative plastic arts for small forms is a significant aspect of artistic education that requires thorough analysis. In the educational process of future jewelry artists, floristic motifs not only enrich their creative arsenal but also contribute to the development of artistic thinking, forming a unique authorial style and approach to creating works of art.

The aim of this work is to investigate the peculiarities of flora representation within the context of learning academic sculpture and decorative plastic arts, identifying methods that facilitate more effective mastery of these elements. Academic sculpture serves as a foundation for analyzing and understanding living forms, while decorative plastic arts act as a tool for their creative transformation into an artistic object [6, p. 119]. An important factor influencing the study of the theme is familiarity with floristic motifs in sculptural works, architectural interiors and exteriors, as well as traditional art crafts [8, p. 10].

The relevance of the topic stems from both the growing interest in floristic motifs in contemporary art and the necessity of incorporating them into educational programs.

The plant world is an inexhaustible source of inspiration for any artist. Its forms, textures, rhythms and symbolism possess a unique appeal. The popularity of floristic motifs can be explained by several factors:

- *Aesthetic value*. Nature provides perfect lines, harmonious proportions, and infinite variety of shapes – from delicate petals to mighty branches. These natural examples serve as an ideal basis for creating elegant and expressive jewelry pieces;

- *Symbolic meaning*. Flowers, grasses, shrubs have been endowed with deep symbolism across various cultures since ancient times. For example, roses represent love, lilies signify purity, laurel stands for victory. Understanding and conveying these meanings through plastic expression makes a piece of jewelry multifaceted and meaningful;

- *Technical foundation*. Working with botanical forms in academic sculpture and decorative plastic arts develops essential skills required by jewelry artists: precision in detailing, ability to handle volume and texture and creation of complex compositions on a miniature scale.

Within the framework of this subject, the following tasks were addressed:

- identify effective practical approaches to integrating floristic elements into the educational process;

- investigate how the specific characteristics of implementing floristic elements influence the development of students' individual authorial styles;

- determine efficient methodological techniques for imparting knowledge about flora;

- reveal ways to improve the educational process.

This research will serve as a foundation for further analysis and discussion regarding the particularities of representing flora in academic sculpture and decorative plastic arts.

In jewelry artworks, every element is carefully thought out and carries significance. Each line, shape and texture in a jewelry piece contributes to its overall harmony [7, p. 3]. Floristic motifs play a crucial role in the repertoire of jewelry artists. Various flowers, graceful intertwining leaves and stems provide endless sources of inspiration for creating adornments. However, transferring this natural beauty into metal or stone necessitates passing through essential stages of learning.

One such stage involves studying academic sculpture and plastic modeling. Learning and volumetric representation of floral elements in academic sculpture is an integral part of preparing future jewelry artists, shaping their artistic vision, developing technical skills and enriching their creative language. Before embarking on three-dimensional depictions of plants, careful preparatory work is necessary: creating preliminary sketches and drafts (Figs. 1-3¹⁸).

Let's consider the opportunities provided by making preliminary sketches and drafts.

✓ *Understanding form and structure*

Nature offers an infinite variety of forms, each with its own internal logic and structure. Preliminary sketches allow students not just to copy the external appearance of a plant but to deeply understand its construction: how stems curve, how petals are arranged, how veins form on leaves. This analytical process helps

¹⁸ Figs. 1-12. Photo from the methodological fund at the institute of traditional applied arts – a Moscow branch of the Russian university of traditional art crafts.

break down complex forms into simpler components, which is fundamentally important for subsequent sculptural modeling.



Figs. 1-3. Flower sketches

✓ ***Observation and analysis***

Modern students often rely on quick surface-level images without fully engaging in the study of form. The first task is to teach them observation – to look closely, slow down their gaze. It's better to start not with instant sketches but with focused observation. When looking at a plant or flower, note how the veins bend, where thickenings occur, how contours change. Through sketching, students learn to see the flower as a unified whole composed of separate parts, each having its own shape, volume and texture. They practice drawing different angles and perspectives, which is essential when creating dynamic and realistic sculptural compositions [4, p. 11].

✓ ***Development of compositional thinking***

A piece of jewelry isn't merely a collection of isolated elements – it's a harmonious composition. Preliminary sketches and drafts serve as experimental platforms for exploring arrangement, scale and interaction of diverse floral motifs.

During the sketching phase, one can quickly explore numerous options before moving on to the more labor-intensive process of sculptural modeling. This allows finding the most successful and expressive solution for the future decoration. Sketches help visualize how different floral elements will interact with each other, creating a cohesive final image [1, p. 9]. This could range from a realistic depiction of a single flower to a stylistically rendered composition featuring multiple plants.

✓ ***Transformation of idea into material realization***

Sketching acts as a bridge between abstract ideas and their material realization. It serves as a blueprint for the artist, allowing them to preconceive what the final result will look like.

Through sketches, one can outline main volumes, shadows and light, which will later enhance the depth and expressiveness of the sculpture. Even at the sketching stage, it's possible to begin planning fine details: the texture of petals, the

shape of stamens, or the curves of leaves. This prevents errors during later stages of work.

Transitioning from drawings to three-dimensional modeling reflects reality reproduced in sculptural materials with spatial qualities. It's evident that viewing a plant from just one angle isn't sufficient; instead, "circular molding" should be practiced – working simultaneously from all viewpoints.

Academic sculpture and decorative small-scale plastic arts become foundational for mastering the skill of translating the vibrant beauty of plants into tangible materials.

Academic sculpture, as the cornerstone of artistic education, establishes the fundamentals of understanding form, volume and proportion. At early stages of training for jewelry artists, academic sculpture plays a pivotal role in building basic skills related to working with volume and proportions. Specifically concerning floral representations, this means:

- *study of structural characteristics*. Students learn to analyze the structure of plants – from root systems to tiny petals. This includes understanding how the stem supports the leaf, how buds form and how flowers bloom. They study the structure of stems, leaves, petals, buds and their proportional relationships to each other. Students train themselves to observe and analyze how light and shadow play on the surfaces of natural forms, seeing not just flat shapes but three-dimensional objects with weight and volume occupying their own space;



Fig. 4. O. Ilin. Relief. Modeling flowers from nature. 2018.

- *conveyance of plasticity and movement*. Even static plants possess inner dynamics. Studying academic sculpture aids in capturing the curvature of stems, softness of petals and elegance of leaves [2, p. 80]. This is achieved through comprehension of lines, rhythm and balance in composition;

- *work with materials*. During this stage, students gain experience with sculptural materials such as clay and plaster. They learn to feel their flexibility, texture and capacity to render subtle details. This builds a foundation

for future work with metals, which require a completely different approach, yet the understanding of material plasticity remains fundamental;

- *composition solutions*. During academic sculpture classes, students learn to construct harmonious compositions. When working with floral motifs, this manifests itself in creating bouquets, wreaths, garlands, where each element must fit organically into the overall design (Fig. 4). It is important to find a balance between detail and general expressiveness of form [5];

- *study of classical samples*. Analyzing classical antique and Renaissance sculptures, where floral ornaments played a significant role, helps students grasp principles of stylization and ornamentation that will later be applied in jewelry art.

✓ *Features of representing flora in small-scale decorative plastics*

Small-format decorative plastics, closely linked to jewelry art, involve transforming floral motifs based on the scale and purpose of future items. There is no need to capture every minute detail of a natural object [10, p. 7]; therefore, key solutions include stylization – simplifying and generalizing floral forms while preserving their recognizability and expressiveness (Figs. 5-6).



Figs. 5, 6. Graphic decorative stylization of plants



Fig. 7. T. Zinovyeva. Decorative plant composition. 2024

A jewelry artist needs to highlight the essentials, emphasize characteristic traits of a plant and give it a decorative quality (Fig. 7).

Tasks set for learners when creating reliefs with decorative solutions for plant forms are very similar to those involved in designing jewelry. Both cases prioritize aesthetic aspects that must harmoniously align with the artistic concept. When crafting jewelry, consideration must extend beyond materials and technologies to encompass cultural contexts in which they will be perceived. Principles of artistic generalization come to the forefront. A selection of expressive techniques takes place to achieve greater expressiveness in compositional decisions. It becomes clear which plant characteristics are vital for recognition and which ones may be omitted. Silhouette work emerges as a critical instrument – the silhouette forms the initial visual impression of the future jewelry item.

Mastering ornamental rhythms enables organizing compositional elements into a system (Figs. 8-9).



Fig. 8, 9. E. Pomazov. Jewelry design developments. Semester works. 2025.

An academic analysis of natural rhythmic patterns transitions to a new level of artistic interpretation and structuring [3]. Developing a series of sketches based on a single floral motif opens up a wide spectrum of possibilities for stylization. Each artwork should be unique, reflecting the author's personality and perspective. Careful attention to detail is crucial because it gives character and expressiveness to the piece. Utilizing various techniques and methods creates layered compositions that attract attention and evoke emotions (Figs. 11-12).

Thus, whether in decorative plastics or jewelry art, finding a balance between form and content is paramount, turning each piece into something more than just an object – a true work of art.

Future jewelry artists must comprehend how floral forms will appear in metal, stone, enamel. This requires knowledge of material properties, their plasticity and processing capabilities. For instance, thin stems might be made from wire, while leaves could be fashioned from sheet metal, followed by engraving or enameling.

Small-scale decorative plastics always focus on creating functional jewelry items – brooches, pendants, earrings, rings. Floral elements in jewelry must not only look aesthetically pleasing but also be safe to use. They shouldn't catch clothing or skin and should resist mechanical damage, such as scratches, bending or breaking. These requirements limit complexity and bulkiness of compositions, as well as the shape and size of individual floral details.

The proposed step-by-step system bridges tradition and innovation. Tradition refers to the academic school providing fundamental knowledge. The academic base doesn't constrain imagination but rather gives it solid support. Innovation encompasses freedom of self-expression, experimentation and formation of a unique personal style. Here, stylization ceases to be mere simplification but transforms into thoughtful reinterpretation of floral forms.



Fig. 10. E. Sorokina.
Brooch “Beauty of
magic rose”.
Graduation
qualification work.
2025

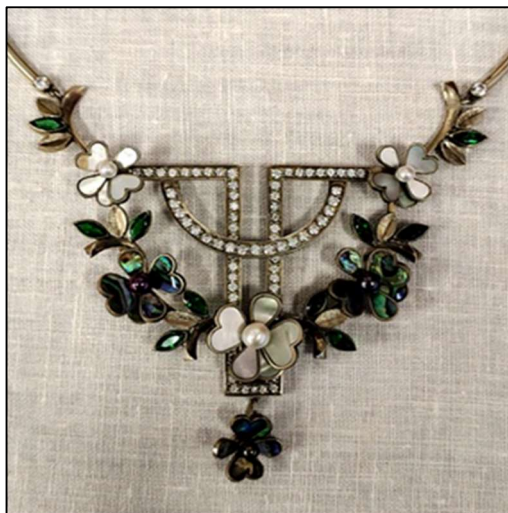


Fig. 11. A. Serov. Necklace “Flowers”.
Graduation qualification work. 2005



Fig. 12. N. Leonov.
Brooch “Bouquet”.
Graduation qualification
work. 2002

Effective teaching of future jewelry artists in floral representation demands an integrative approach, as this topic naturally unites several core professional preparation disciplines.

During academic drawing lessons, students acquire knowledge of plant construction, laws of chiaroscuro, perspective and proportions. They learn to portray the texture of petals, leaves and stems with maximum accuracy. Throughout the learning process, their ability to notice and accurately reproduce natural forms in all their intricate details and nuances develops.

When completing assignments in the discipline of “Decorative drawing”, students master techniques of stylization, generalization and ornamental construction of floral motifs, deliberately transforming them. Importantly, the goal is not simply to replicate nature but to reveal its rhythmic structure, highlight key elements, translate three-dimensional forms into two-dimensional ones and subordinate form to decorative intent. Such skills are highly sought after in jewelry design, where floral motifs frequently serve as the foundation for jewelry compositions, such as rings, brooches or necklaces.

During academic sculpture sessions, students model plant forms using clay, exploring primary principles of working with volumetric and relief formations. As they delve into small-scale decorative plastics, students learn to select the optimal scale of composition elements for planned jewelry designs, think through textures and surface transitions and take into account material characteristics such as metal, enamel and gemstones. The connection between observing nature and creative transformation becomes particularly apparent here – for instance, a delicate corolla of a flower might transform into a filigree frame for a precious stone, while a leaf curl could become an ergonomic clasp.

Therefore, the interconnection of academic subjects discussed above forms the foundation of training for jewelry artists:

- academic drawing provides precision in perceiving forms, volumes and proportions;
- decorative drawing develops the language of stylization;
- academic sculpture serves as a foundation for analyzing and comprehending plant forms [6, p. 119];
- decorative plastic arts function as tools for creatively transforming plant forms into artistic objects.

Only the synthesis of these components enables students to create jewelry pieces with floral motifs that are simultaneously identifiable (thanks to knowledge of plant structures) and artistically expressive (through the ability to transform plant forms). An integrated approach eliminates fragmentary learning, fostering holistic professional thinking where observation, analysis and creativity operate as a unified process.

The academic foundation does not restrict imagination but rather provides reliable support. The suggested sequence integrates academic disciplines into a single cycle, ensuring a gradual transition from observing nature to creating original jewelry designs. When a student understands the actual structure of a flower, their imaginative creations gain credibility and depth. Stylization stops being simple simplification and becomes deliberate transformation.

Representing floral elements in the course of academic sculpture and small-scale decorative plastic arts is an indispensable component of training future jewelry artists. These disciplines lay the groundwork for understanding form, volume, texture and proportion, enhancing observational skills and artistic thinking [9, p. 328]. They enable students not just to duplicate nature but to creatively reimagine it, producing elegant, expressive and harmonious jewelry pieces that delight the eye and carry a touch of the living beauty of the plant world.

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