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Exhibitions of educational works as a tool for developing professional success in students specializing in traditional art crafts

Abstract. The article examines the role of exhibition activities in the professional training of students studying at the department of drawing and painting of the institute of traditional applied arts. The author analyzes the experience of organizing art exhibitions of student's educational and creative works, describes their impact on the formation of future artists' professional success. In this study, the concept of "professional success" is clarified with respect to artists working in traditional arts and crafts, various types of exhibitions are considered (retrospective, thematic, personal, etc.), as well as the role of participation in exhibitions and competitions in the development of both professional and personal qualities of students. Special attention is paid to the involvement of students in the process of organizing exhibitions and its influence on the development of interest in exhibition activity, artistic taste, visual literacy and organizational skills.

Keywords: professional success, exhibition design, exhibition activity, higher education, concept.

Relevance

In contemporary conditions, an artist engaged in traditional art crafts does not merely create artwork but must also be prepared to promote and popularize their own creations and the broader field of art they represent. One of the most effective tools for marketing such creative endeavors is participating in art exhibitions. This serves not only as a means to showcase one's work to a broad audience but also as a way to validate one's professional standing.

Just like established professionals, students need validation of their achievements. Grades serve as conventional indicators of academic performance among students. However, for aspiring artists, achieving professional success requires more than just standard measures of academic achievement; it necessitates specific criteria that reflect the unique demands of their chosen discipline.

This paper explores the exhibition activities conducted by the drawing and painting department within the space of the institute of traditional applied arts, which is part of the Moscow branch of the Russian university of traditional art crafts. Of particular interest for research are studies summarizing the practice of holding art exhibitions featuring student works organized by the Russian university of traditional art crafts specifically for the Day of Russian science.

The basis for this research was provided by developments in the organization of teaching processes and issues related to the development of aesthetic perception [10, p. 238], particularly concerning the preparation of students for participation in exhibitions. Additionally, materials were utilized regarding current trends in exhibit design, the significance of concepts in contemporary exhibitions and the project-based approach “from idea conception through implementation” [8; 11].

Methods and materials

To investigate the issue of forming professional success for future artists in the area of traditional art crafts, several scientific methods have been employed. These include interviews with first-, second-, and third-year students who specialize in fields such as artistic modeling, decorative painting (“Moscow letter”), metalwork (jewelry art) and fabric design with artistic painting. Furthermore, analyses of students’ paintings – both assigned coursework and independent projects – were carried out.

Results

Professional terminology in the field of traditional art crafts has been expanded. **A meaningful concept – professional success of future artists in traditional art crafts within the framework of continuous professional education – has been formulated.** The current concept of “professional success” has been clarified specifically for the profession of artist in traditional art crafts.

The material for scientific analysis consisted of practical activities conducted by the department of drawing and painting at the institute of traditional applied arts during the academic years 2023–2024 and 2024–2025. Over this period, more than twenty exhibitions were organized showcasing students’ academic and creative works both at secondary vocational level and higher education levels. Annually, exhibitions of the best student works resulting from outdoor practice sessions are held. Additionally, twice annually, exhibitions of outstanding academic works completed during winter and summer examination periods take place.

These types of exhibitions allow students to view their own works and those of their peers in a new light – not merely as completed assignments but also as finished pieces worthy of exhibition. Through these events, students realize that they already create works possessing artistic value even during their studies. Furthermore, participating in such exhibitions introduces a novel criterion for evaluating educational performance directly by the students themselves. When high marks awarded by examination boards are accompanied by inclusion in an exhibition, students experience emotional satisfaction from their efforts. Conversely, if a highly rated assignment does not make it into the final exhibit following examination reviews, students express disappointment. Particularly impressive achievements in drawing and painting by individual students are additionally recognized through personal exhibitions.

An innovation introduced was the regular organization of retrospective and thematic exhibitions titled the “Golden fund” of the institute of traditional applied arts. Retrospective exhibitions arouse special interest among students because some of the featured works were created by institute professors when they themselves were students.

Students participate in various competitions including: “Best representation of a flower (rose) using academic and decorative painting techniques,” “Painting of a thematic still life ‘Christmas’”, “Beauty of my homeland”, “Easter still life”, “Field studies in Fedoskino” and others. Visits to art exhibitions followed by discussions regarding the roles of curators and exhibition designers are regularly arranged. One notable visit was to the exhibition “Red adherents. Malyavin and Arkhipov” at the State Tretyakov gallery, which had a profound impact on the students. There was much debate over the layout design of the exhibition. Why were works presented according to authors in certain halls and by themes in other halls? Why did different halls feature walls of varying colors? Why weren’t the works displayed chronologically? What purpose did additional stands and partitions built within the exhibition hall serve?

At the educator’s request, students wrote essays describing their impressions and analyzing the influence of exhibition arrangements, highlighting cases of successful spatial organization. For example, works depicting peasant women dressed in colorful, bright clothing and headscarves, arranged in a semicircle, evoked feelings of dance and circle dancing among students. Many students inspired by the exhibited works composed still lifes in shades of red and executed oil sketches based on them. Attending art exhibitions motivates students towards their own artistic endeavors, encourages reflection on possibilities for organizing exhibition spaces, develops visual literacy, and refines aesthetic taste. These qualities are fostered through participation in exhibitions hosted by the institute of traditional art crafts.

Students actively participate in internal art contests and exhibitions organized by the institute of traditional applied arts and follow external regional and nationwide open calls, grants and opportunities aimed at young artists. However, many students often hesitate to submit entries for external art competitions due to doubts about the competitiveness of their works, difficulties understanding accompanying documentation requirements and fear of rejection.

To address this issue, educators at the drawing and painting department of the institute of traditional applied arts intensified their efforts toward organizing student artwork exhibitions. This initiative aims to enhance students’ professional development and readiness for future careers and exhibition activities. Support includes comprehensive consultations covering all relevant questions. Regular meetings dedicated to career advancement strategies provide insights into how to join art unions, collaborate with institutions and galleries, obtain professional photography services for artworks, prepare creative biographies and write artist statements (artist manifestos).

As a result, six undergraduate students submitted applications for regional competitions between 2023 and 2025 and five began developing professional portfolios. Thus, involving students in the process of exhibition organization helps foster their interest in participating in external exhibits beyond the institute.

Discussion of results

Based on definitions of professional success formulated by E.A. Klimov and I.V. Arendachuk [2, p. 63], it is important to note that in this study, the notion of

professional success is considered specific to future artists working in the area of traditional art crafts.

Analyzing scientific research exploring the essential characteristics of traditional art crafts and the peculiarities of professional education in this domain [5], the author finds it necessary to refine the definition of professional success for the sphere of professional education in this area.

The professional success of a future artist engaged in traditional art crafts lies in having both general and specific indicators of success, which include creating niche products – unique works of traditional art crafts – as well as awards, prizes and reviews specific to this field, along with contributing to the preservation and development of this form of art.

Works of traditional art crafts carry deep significance, reflecting not only the spiritual content of an individual's inner world but also embodying the moral and cultural values of the nation. Therefore, the primary distinctive indicator of success in the realm of traditional art crafts becomes the creation of an artist's professional output – a piece of art that encapsulates the national culture of Russia.

Thus, under the term "professional success" of a future artist in traditional art crafts, one understands *professional recognition of the student's preparedness to create a unique work of art that contributes to the spiritual and moral development of individuals and reflects the national culture of Russia.*

Since the main way for an artist to present their professional successes is through participation in exhibitions, the department of drawing and painting at the institute of traditional applied arts conducts active work in organizing exhibitions of students' academic and creative works [4]. This activity aims to develop students' professional success and prepare them for exhibition and professional activities. The work of an artist involves not only creating artworks but also promoting and popularizing them. To achieve this, future students need to learn skills such as presenting their work to audiences, preparing supporting documents (creating professional portfolios, submitting applications for art competitions), preparing works for exhibition, understanding the nuances of arranging different forms of art and exhibition spaces, etc. [1].

Students show interest in exhibitions taking place at the university: "...I find it interesting because it's a great opportunity to showcase my work and receive feedback. I'd love to participate in exhibitions because it broadens my horizons."

Many students are interested in art competitions and open calls, including regional ones, but don't dare apply: "I've never participated in outside exhibitions and probably wouldn't want to anytime soon, because I'm afraid of public opinion."

There may be several reasons why a student is interested in exhibitions but doesn't actually participate. Often, students worry that their work isn't good enough, despite receiving high grades: "I'm always interested in competition or challenging myself. But I don't submit applications because I believe I'm not skilled enough yet".

Understanding and accepting both the individual traits of students and the specific nature of their profession, pedagogical support at the university focuses on helping overcome challenges that might hinder future professional activities.

At the institute of traditional applied arts, diverse painting exhibitions are organized, allowing not only the identification of top-quality works but also enabling broader student involvement in the exhibition process [7]. For example, figure 1⁵⁰ shows a fragment of an exhibition following an open air session. Plein air assignments vary widely, ranging from long-term and short-term tasks to sketching exercises in both graphic and painting techniques using various materials. Given the variety of completed assignments, nearly every participant could contribute to the exhibition. Student creative practices (plein air sessions) are organized across various historical and architectural landmarks in Moscow. In 2025, plein air sessions took place at sites such as VDNKh, Krutitskoye Podvor'ye and Novospassky stavropigial male monastery. Selection criteria emphasize convincing depiction of specific architectural monuments, recognizable architectural elements and unexpected perspectives. Exhibitions balance graphic and painterly representations. Curators (faculty members from the drawing and painting department) avoid repetition of subjects, graphic styles or painting techniques. Amongst the painted sketches, preference is given to those capturing varied states of nature and time of day.

Work on the planned exhibition begins immediately after the examination viewing following the completion of creative practice. The exhibition curators select the best student works created on non-standard paper formats utilizing diverse graphic or painting techniques and materials (on colored or toned paper, embossed paper, cardboard, hardboard, using watercolor pencils, acrylic markers, etc.). Selected works are then used to compile the exhibition layout.

The composition of the exhibition is developed similarly to the creation of an art piece. The conceptualization of the exhibition design aligns with the theme and core idea of the event, ensuring that the selected works fully reflect these ideas. Within the exhibition, it is crucial to identify a focal point, rhythm and harmonious color palette. Moreover, the concept behind the exhibition arrangement can be influenced by the architectural design of the exhibition hall. For instance, small-scale graphic works are frequently grouped together onto single sheets or a portion of the exhibition may consist solely of vertical compositions. Once this decision is made, subsequent selections focus exclusively on vertically-oriented works. On occasion, students propose adding special elements to the finalized exhibition setup. Instead of conventional explanatory texts, students sometimes use photographs of participants, as seen in the "Plein air 2024" exhibition, where photos taken during the practice sessions were incorporated into the display.

Exhibitions of the best academic works following examination sessions are organized, open to students of all courses and profiles (Fig. 2). During the formation of the exhibition layout, curators perform another round of selection, driven by the requirement to avoid repetitions of identical set-ups and angles in images, as well as the necessity for a diverse range of color schemes. The choice of works can depend on format or execution technique. For instance, if large-format works executed in

⁵⁰ Figs. 1-7. Photos by the article author.

oil painting are scheduled for inclusion in the exhibition, watercolor works will be included in a separate exhibition.



Fig. 1. Exhibition of students' academic works "Plein air 2024"



Fig. 2. Exhibition of the best academic works "Summer session outcomes 2023-2024"

To reward academic achievements, solo exhibitions of students' works are organized [9]. Figure 3 presents a solo exhibition entitled "Creative experiments" by student Petkova D.M., majoring in program 54.03.02 Decorative and applied arts and folk crafts, specialization: Decorative painting "Moscow letter ". This personal exhibition project, showcasing the student's accomplishments, contributed significantly to stimulating cognitive interest among fellow learners in studying painting. As a consequence, it led to improved academic performance within the group. Initially, most students expressed admiration for Petkova's solo exhibition but felt uncertain whether they could match her high standard, doubting their ability to complete assignments on larger scales. Nevertheless, within just a month, students became actively involved in setting up still-life compositions (searching for objects with intriguing shapes and textures, richly ornamented draperies), independently tackling assignments of increased complexity. Ultimately, the entire class requested permission to switch to a larger scale for completing the task "Painting solution of thematic still-life 'Feast'" featuring breads, traditional art craft products and ornately-decorated draperies (Fig. 4).



Fig. 3. Solo exhibition of student D.M. Petkova "Creative experiments", academic year 2024–2025



Fig. 4. Exhibition of the best academic works following winter session 2024-2025, "Our accomplishments"

Equally engaging was the exhibition devoted to the poster competition celebrating the 80th anniversary of Great Victory day. Sixteen undergraduate students from various majors participated in the competition. Working collaboratively, the posters were produced step-by-step. Some students contributed to designing drafts, others focused on rendering images and still others attended to detailing. Collaborating on the posters motivated the students, who decided not to limit themselves to simple hangings. At the suggestion of the students, the exhibition was enhanced with bouquets of poppies made from colored paper. Consequently, what started as a straightforward presentation evolved into a thematic installation. It marked the first attempt by students to organize an exhibition space.

Students not only exhibit their own works but also engage in preparing exhibitions of other artworks. Figure 5 illustrates the exhibition "May garden" from the "Golden collection" of the institute of traditional applied arts. The exhibition features works created by former students of the institute over two decades ago, including today's faculty members. Each retrospective exhibition generates lively interest among students, spurring discussion and critical evaluation of the presented works.



Fig. 5. The exhibition "May garden" from the "Golden collection" of the institute of traditional applied arts

During academic painting classes, works displayed at exhibitions are frequently analyzed as examples. Students are encouraged to examine the painting techniques employed in these works. Frequent topics of discussion include the means of achieving illusions of space and depth through painting methods. Participants of the exhibitions often comment on their own works. By participating in exhibitions, students overcome their fears related to audience exposure and self-doubt. They become confident in publicly presenting their creations and giving interviews.

During the academic years 2023–2024 and 2024–2025, the institute of traditional applied arts organized 13 exhibitions displaying works created by students in drawing and painting classes. Additionally, students participated in 11 competitions, earning certificates of participation for 28 students and diplomas for winners for 18 students. Students highlight the importance of obtaining certificates: "Participating in exhibitions is exciting and beneficial, especially when certificates of participation are issued afterward, enhancing our portfolio".

It is worth noting that student engagement is maintained throughout all stages of preparation for art exhibitions [8]. Conceptual ideas for exhibitions, exhibition layouts and responsibilities are discussed with students, including preparation and framing of works, mounting and dismantling exhibitions, creating advertisements and explanations, and providing information support through photo documentation and online publication.

Tasks for exhibition preparations are distributed among students based on their preferences and areas of interest. Those inclined towards manual labor offer assistance in work preparation: making passepartouts, fixing frames, hanging works. Such activities reveal numerous professional secrets. For instance, paintings on hardboard must be mounted on stretchers to prevent deformation of the painted surface. Similarly, canvas paintings on stretcher bars can deform during transportation and assembly due to fluctuations in humidity and temperature. To avoid such issues, it is advisable to choose sturdier stretchers reinforced with crossbars. However, artists must remain ready for unpredictable situations. Deformation of the stretcher bar, for example, can be concealed from viewers through specialized mounting techniques: the stretcher is secured to the wall corners and fastened tightly.

Posters and captions attract students interested in mastering graphic editors, who suggest options for compositional solutions: black-and-white or color, incorporating background imagery, font choices, etc. The final approval of the poster design rests with the exhibition curator.

Online coverage of exhibition activities plays a key role in promoting and advancing an artist's career. Today, an artist's success largely depends on their social media presence and publishing activity. Students passionate about art photography capture their works to ensure their availability for catalogues and professional portfolios. Throughout the exhibition preparation process, students gain proficiency in handling supplementary documentation (posters, captions, photographic materials, accompanying text).

All these activities contribute to the development of students' readiness for future exhibition and professional activities. Educational exhibitions simulate scenarios where students independently organize and manage art exhibitions. Thus, a practical solution has been found to create conditions for success within the learning environment, tailored specifically for future artists specializing in traditional art crafts [11].

Organizing exhibitions of students' academic works is an integral component of professional training for future artists in traditional art crafts. Their participation in such exhibitions cultivates motivation for continued exhibition activities, enhances their abilities to present their work effectively, prepares them to handle necessary documentation for exhibiting, builds their visual awareness and artistic sensibility, teaches them organizational skills and equips them to overcome stage fright when facing an audience.

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