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Features of spatial representation in traditional art crafts of various types: pedagogical perspective

Abstract. The article analyzes the methods of spatial representation inherent in the works of specific types of traditional art crafts. In this regard, the problem of forming the content of teaching the "Perspective" academic discipline in the training of future artists of traditional art crafts is considered from the perspective of professional orientation. The author concludes that it is necessary to include in the perspective training program information about the diversity of methods of space construction in artistic works, as well as their impact on compositional solutions and the ability to emotionally affect the viewer.

Keywords: traditional art crafts, perspective, spatial structures in a painting, specifics of learning, content of learning, lacquer miniature painting.

The educational program for future artists specializing in traditional art crafts at all levels – both secondary vocational and higher education – includes the course “Perspective”. This discipline is essential when completing assignments related to general professional subjects such as “Academic drawing” and “Academic painting”, where space is conveyed through means of realistic painting and drawing techniques.

However, different forms of traditional art crafts have their own unique visual language shaped by traditions, manufacturing technologies, thematic content and stylistic representations. It naturally raises a question about how applicable knowledge of perspective will be in the future professional activities of an artist working within these traditional art craft disciplines.

Perspective (from French ‘perspective’, from Latin ‘perspicio’ meaning “I see clearly”) is the science of representing three-dimensional objects on a two-dimensional surface in such a way that they appear to human vision with all apparent changes in size and shape. This definition reflects both the physiological aspect of perceiving space (the eye functioning as an optical instrument) and the psychological one (how the brain interprets what it sees).

In fine arts, there are numerous methods for depicting space: orthogonal projection systems, axonometry (parallel perspective), linear perspective, reverse perspective, perceptual perspective (general theory of perspective), spherical or dome-like perspective, scenographic perspective, atmospheric perspective (the only non-geometric method of creating depth), etc.

There are also additional techniques used to create depth and volume on a flat canvas, including diminishing figures as they recede into distance, overlapping one

object over another (overlapping technique), placing background elements higher than foreground ones, portraying light and shadow to suggest form and depth within depicted objects.

To examine specific methods of constructing space relevant to particular forms of traditional art crafts, given the diversity of this genre, we can categorize them according to artistic expression tools (specific techniques, technologies and materials) [9, p. 67]:

- volume-sculptural types of traditional art crafts (bone carving, wood carving, stone carving, ceramics, toys, jewelry art);
- textile-ornamental types of traditional art crafts (artistic textiles: artistic lacemaking, artistic embroidery, weaving, knitting);
- decorative pictorial-plane types of traditional art crafts (painting on wood, metal, fabric);
- miniature pictorial-plane types of traditional art crafts (Palekh, Mstyora, Kholuy, Fedoskino lacquer miniature painting).

We define the methods of spatial representation (or its absence) characteristic of works belonging to different types of traditional art crafts.

1. Works of volume-sculptural type do not require the creation of additional illusion of space since sculpture is inherently three-dimensional. However, situations arise where it becomes necessary to create an additional illusion of depth in sculptural compositions.

For instance, in certain pieces of bone-carving art or wooden sculpture, when trying to achieve greater depth and theatrical effect on a shallow plane, theater perspective is utilized (Fig. 1⁷¹, 2⁷²). As objects move further away from the viewer, their scale decreases. Sometimes, the effect of aerial perspective may join in, resulting in more generalized treatment of distant areas. However, due to the demand for ornamentation, authors frequently fill even distant planes with detailed elements.

Relief perspective is employed in relief compositions. The illusion of space is created through varying depths of relief and play with scales (Figs. 3, 4). Additionally, overlapping of some objects by others indicates their spatial arrangement.

2. Works of textile-ornamental types of traditional art crafts are characterized by planar nature of images. The main representational motif is ornamentation, while relief is achieved through protrusions of threads and strands.

In isolated cases – particularly in decorative flat representations such as lace panels or embroidered tapestries featuring animalistic and landscape themes (Figs. 5, 6), as well as human imagery – these are executed on a flat surface using conventional “two-dimensional perspective”, i.e., a system of orthogonal projections.

⁷¹ Figs. 1, 3, 5-9. Photo from the methodological fund of the Russian university of traditional art crafts.

⁷² Figs. 2, 4. Photo from the methodological fund of the Bogogrodskoye institute of artistic wood carving.



Fig. 1. A. Grubyan. Sculptural composition
“Family idyll”. Bone carving artwork.
Russian university of traditional art crafts



Fig. 2. V. Dudina. Sculptural composition
“Path of goodness”. 2019.
Bogogrodskoye artistic wood carving.
Bogogrodskoye institute of artistic
wood carving



Fig. 3. V. Turenko. Panel “Entrance into
Jerusalem”. Artistic bone carving.
Russian university of traditional
art crafts



Fig. 4. M.S. Babkin. Graduation qualification
work on the topic: “Old Russian icon painters”.
2009. Bogogrodskoye artistic wood carving.
Bogogrodskoye institute of artistic
wood carving

Each part of the image is transferred onto the plane in a manner that maximizes silhouette clarity and provides maximum understanding of the subject matter. Such representations typically lack depth and volume, emphasizing flatness and graphic expressiveness. The flattening process during stylization leads to abstraction from three-dimensionality of objects and spaces. Occasionally, one object might overlap another (“overlapping”), simulating nearer objects obscuring those farther back, or elements of direct linear perspective could be introduced – for example, in a lace insert on a screen titled “Saint Petersburg”. However, neither overlapping nor lines leading toward the horizon creates any illusion of depth; rather, these techniques serve purely for composing and rhythmically organizing the narrative without disrupting the overall flatness of the work.

3. In works of decorative pictorial-plane types of traditional art crafts, such as painted wood and metal items (Nizhny Tagil style, Zhostovo style), as well as painted fabrics, space is characterized by the absence of linear perspective and the creation of a conditional minimal depth (Figs. 7, 8). Objects depicted, which usually consist of still-life compositions (flowers, fruits), feature a simplified chiaroscuro rendering intended to convey volume. To suggest depth, the effect of overlapping (“overlapping”) is employed, along with tonal and aerial perspective, characterized by a reduction in color saturation, tone and/or sharpness of objects as they recede into the distance. On fabric-painted panels, conditionally realistic scenes employing linear perspective are possible (Fig. 9).



Fig. 5. Artistic-graphic project panel “Anniversary”. 2013. Artistic lacemaking. Russian university of traditional art crafts



Fig. 6. Screen “Saint Petersburg”. Artistic lacemaking. Russian university of traditional art crafts



Fig. 7. I.S. Tikhonova. “Traditional motifs”. 2019. Nizhny Tagil decorative painting



Fig. 8. M. Chernyakova. Shawl. 2009. Artistic fabric painting

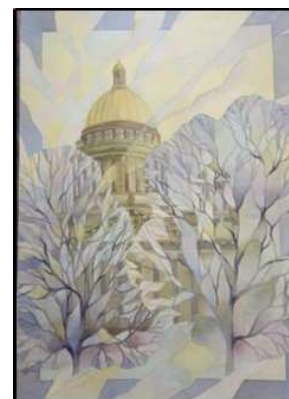


Fig. 9. Panel “Saint Petersburg”. Artistic fabric painting

Russian university of traditional art crafts

4. The most diverse range of spatial representation techniques is found in works of miniature pictorial-plane types of traditional art crafts. Let us list the spatial construction methods applied in the works of Palekh, Mstyora, Kholuy and Fedoskino lacquer miniature painting.

Works of Fedoskino lacquer miniature painting tend to be highly realistic. Artists following this tradition continue the classical realist approach to painting, including spatial construction. Depth is achieved through linear perspective, where depicted objects proportionately decrease in size as they approach the horizon. This method assumes a single viewpoint and a unified vanishing point for parallel lines converging towards the horizon line (Fig. 10⁷³).

Chiaroscuro modeling in Fedoskino lacquer miniature works achieves volumetric effects for depicted objects. Subtle gradations of tonal and aerial perspectives help enhance the sense of depth. Counterbalancing the illusion of depth are inclusions of mother-of-pearl, foil and gold leaf, as well as ornate patterns, enhancing the decorative quality of the piece and linking the image to the object's surface.

Artists of Mstyora, Kholuy and Palekh lacquer miniature painting embraced iconography's traditions, decorative techniques and methods of presenting symbolic space. Their works organically combine axonometry, drafting techniques, linear and inverse perspectives, supplemented occasionally by aerial perspective.

Let us consider the techniques of spatial representation in specific examples of lacquer miniature works from these schools. Axonometry serves as the foundation for constructing space in such creations (Figs. 11⁷⁴, 12⁷⁵, 13⁷⁶). This depiction technique is also referred to as “parallel perspective”. Its distinctive feature is the absence of convergence points for parallel lines and the presence of multiple horizons. Even when depicting vast landscapes, the depth remains limited and is determined by the artist themselves. Objects, including characters' figures, are rendered voluminously, without changes in size dictated by perspective.

In Mstyora, Kholuy and Palekh lacquer miniature paintings, the principle of orthogonal projections is employed, where the Earth's surface unfolds perpendicularly to the viewer, and all objects upon it – people, architecture, trees, etc. – are arranged frontally, without oblique shortenings [1; 4; 7] (Figs. 12, 13).

Similarly to icons, reverse perspective appears in compositions of lacquer miniature painting (Fig. 11). With this method, objects increase in size as they move away from the viewer. Unlike icons, where reverse perspective carries sacred meanings, in lacquer painting it is applied in accordance with compositional requirements – to organize rhythms, emphasize the planarity of the image and impart greater fairy-tale-like quality and conventionality to the plot through spatial

⁷³ Fig. 10. Photo by the author of the article. Collection of the Museum of Fedoskino factory of miniature painting.

⁷⁴ Fig. 11. Photo by the author of the article. Collection of the State museum of Palekh arts.

⁷⁵ Fig. 12. Photo from the methodological fund of the Kholuy institute of lacquer miniature painting named after N.N. Kharlamov.

⁷⁶ Figs. 13, 15. Photo from the methodological fund of the Mstyora institute of lacquer miniature painting named after F.A. Modorov.

construction. Thus, the integrity of the artwork and its connection to the surface of the item are ensured.



Fig. 10. E. Gorodilina. Box "Russian winter". 2009. Fedoskino lacquer miniature painting. Museum of Fedoskino factory of miniature painting



Fig. 11. N.P. Lopatin. Box "Tale of the dead princess". 1990. Palekh lacquer miniature painting. State museum of Palekh arts



Fig. 12. T. Latysheva. Panel "Kholuy masters". 2018. Kholuy lacquer miniature painting. Kholuy institute of lacquer miniature painting named after N.N. Kharlamov



Fig. 13. T. Kochetkova. Panel plate "Here gallops a swift troika". 2018. Mstyora lacquer miniature painting. Mstyora institute of lacquer miniature painting named after F.A. Modorov

Another principle of spatial construction similar to iconography involves simultaneity (multifacetedness), where several temporally distinct narratives are presented outside a unified perspective framework within a single work. Furthermore, draughtsmanlike techniques (sections, cuts, architectural unrollings) and intentional perspective are common in lacquer miniatures – a method wherein

differences in sizes between objects and figures are not meant to construct space but to highlight the significance and hierarchical value of an element within the narrative (Figs. 12-14). In select lacquer miniature works, spherical perspective is utilized. Characteristic of spherical Easter egg surfaces and convex box surfaces, in individual works executed on flat surfaces, there's a “play” with represented space, where lines curve more sharply as they depart from the center, approaching circularity and multiple viewpoints exist. This dynamic composition underscores the conventionality of the depicted action (Figs. 14⁷⁷, 15).



Fig. 14. D.V. Molodkin. Panel “Mstyora Madonna”. 2022.
Mstyora lacquer miniature painting.
Mstyora art museum



Fig. 15. Ya.R. Volozyov. Tabletop panel “Seasons. Autumn. Noble hunt” (fragment).
2019 Mstyora lacquer miniature painting.
Mstyora institute of lacquer miniature painting named after F.A. Modorov

Additionally, there are distinct features of interpreting depicted space inherent to each direction of lacquer miniature painting. For instance, Palekh miniatures exhibit a pronounced tendency toward flattened forms and spaces [1]. Volumes are communicated not through chiaroscuro but via highlights on raised areas, complemented by uniform scaling across figures regardless of proximity, thus adding to the decorative quality of the composition. In contrast, Mstyora lacquer miniatures incorporate aerial perspective, where near and far planes differ tonally and chromatically and skies display subtle transitions in hue. These elements collectively produce a sensation of landscape depth; however, architectural structures remain free of perspective distortion, appearing instead as screens separating the foreground and background [7].

Thus, lacquer miniature paintings demonstrate considerable variety in spatial constructions aimed less at replicating reality than serving as symbolic interpretations of space, acting as crucial means of compositional and rhythmic organization within the artwork.

The ability to construct visual space and consciously apply various techniques for conveying depth constitutes one of the essential competencies for an artist. Accessing an artwork itself requires comprehension of its spatial structure [10, p. 247]. Therefore, when designing curricula for teaching “Perspective” to

⁷⁷ Fig. 14. Photo by the author of the article. Collection of the Mstyora art museum.

aspiring artists of traditional art crafts, it is imperative to take into account the characteristics of spatial construction specific to the respective forms of this art.

A significant portion of this discipline traditionally consists of studying the theory of straight linear perspective as the basis for spatial constructions in realistic renderings, required for tasks in academic painting, academic drawing and outdoor sketching practice within basic art education [5]. Straight linear perspective, being a central projection system falling under descriptive geometry, is complex to comprehend and extensive in scope, necessitating substantial practical exercises. Moreover, it serves as a reference point for comparison with other types of perspectives.

Nevertheless, when shaping the curriculum for the “Perspective” course targeted at future artists of traditional art crafts, instruction should not be confined solely to straight linear perspective – it must provide students with insight into the full spectrum of spatial construction techniques [8].

Proficiency in applying various spatial construction methods – such as axonometry, reverse perspective, orthogonal projections, among others – is indispensable for fulfilling assignments in courses like “Decorative drawing” and “Decorative painting”, where students learn to transform and stylize images. Equally important is mastery of these techniques for core professional courses such as “Design”, “Performing skills” and “Improvement of performing skills” [2].

Especially critical is familiarity with diverse spatial construction systems for future lacquer miniature painters. Consequently, their training program in the “Perspective” course encompasses thorough exploration of topics such as “Reverse perspective”, “Perceptual perspective” and “Orthogonal projections and axonometry” [8].

Certain practical components of the course curriculum are tailored specifically to student profiles. Analytical breakdowns focusing on spatial construction systems encompass not just easel painting but also works from various traditional art crafts genres, such as lacquer miniature painting. This approach strengthens the professional orientation of the “Perspective” course and reinforces its connection to professional art disciplines.

The analysis conducted in this article regarding spatial transmission systems in lacquer miniature paintings demonstrates that a future miniaturist painter must master the entire array of perspective construction methods. Conscious application of these techniques grants greater creative freedom grounded in profound knowledge of established traditions.

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