

Ermakova M.V., candidate of pedagogical sciences, deputy director for scientific and methodological work of the Fedoskino institute of lacquer miniature painting – a branch of the Russian university of traditional art crafts, 141052, p. Fedoskino, Lukutinskaya str., 33; e-mail: ermakova-80@mail.ru

International student forum “Culture Unites Us” – a scientific and creative dialogue between students of Russia and Belarus

Abstract. The article analyzes the main outcomes of the International student forum “Culture Unites Us”, which was held at the Vitebsk State University named after P.M. Masherov. The forum was attended by students from this university and the Russian university of traditional art crafts. The scientific, creative, cultural and educational programs of the forum were aimed at developing Russian-Belarusian cooperation in the field of traditional art crafts. Particular attention is given to the work of thematic sections dedicated to the issues of preserving and developing traditional art crafts, as well as the artistic, stylistic, technical and technological aspects of creating works of traditional applied art. The article also highlights student participation in competitive and exhibition activities. The significance of the forum is shown as a platform for scientific dialogue, the exchange of professional experience and the strengthening of cultural ties between Russia and Belarus.

Keywords: International student forum, Russian university of traditional art crafts, Vitebsk State University named after P.M. Masherov, traditional art crafts, traditional applied art, students’ research activities, Russia, Belarus.

From May 19 to 21, 2026, in the city of Vitebsk (Republic of Belarus) at the Vitebsk State University named after P.M. Masherov, the International student forum “Culture Unites Us” was held (Fig. 1⁷).

The forum was organized by the Vitebsk State University named after P.M. Masherov and the Russian university of traditional art crafts. The event brought together representatives from both universities and became a significant scientific, educational, creative and cultural platform that strengthened cooperation between Russia and Belarus in the study, preservation and development of traditional art crafts.

The co-chairs of the organizing committee were V.V. Bogatyryova, rector of the Vitebsk State University named after P.M. Masherov, doctor of economic sciences, professor, and O.P. Rybnikova, rector of the Russian university of traditional art crafts, candidate of pedagogical sciences.

⁷ Figs. 1-10. Photo by the Media Center at the Vitebsk State University named after P.M. Masherov. Official community of the VSU named after P.M. Masherov VK. – URL: https://vk.com/vsu_vitebsk (Date of access: 01.06.2026).



Fig. 1. The solemn opening of the International student forum
“Culture Unites Us”, Vitebsk, 2026

At the solemn opening of the forum, welcoming addresses to the participants were delivered by V.V. Bogatyryova, rector of the VSU named after P.M. Masherov, and V.F. Maksimovich, academician of the Russian academy of education, doctor of pedagogical sciences, professor, and president of the Russian university of traditional art crafts. The plenary session of the forum was dedicated to key issues of cultural interaction between Russia and Belarus, the preservation of the national cultural code and the development of higher education in the field of traditional art crafts. This was reflected in the report by V.F. Maksimovich titled “Russia and Belarus: unity of culture”.

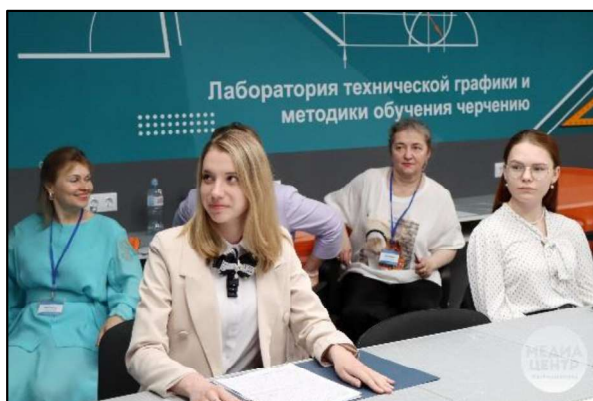
During the plenary session, E.G. Plytnik, candidate of culturology and associate professor at the department of fine arts at the VSU named after P.M. Masherov, revealed the role of art crafts as a crucial factor in preserving and presenting the national cultural code, emphasizing their importance for transmitting traditional values in contemporary culture. E.S. Mileeva, head of the department of decorative and applied arts and technical graphics at VSU named after P.M. Masherov, presented modern trends in the use of linen fabric in clothing design, using products from Belarusian enterprises as an example. She demonstrated how flax processing traditions are integrated into the modern textile industry and highlighted the possibility of harmoniously combining natural materials with national cultural traditions. G.A. Bobrovich, associate professor at the department of decorative and applied arts and technical graphics at the VSU named after P.M. Masherov, focused on the application of modern technologies in teaching traditional applied arts. She showed how digital tools contribute to the preservation and actualization of artistic practices in the educational process (Fig. 2).

The substantive core of the forum was a joint competition for students’ research and creative works, which united the research, artistic-practical and educational components of the event (Figs. 3, 4). The competitive program defined the main directions for professional dialogue among participants and was organized within two thematic sections: “Preservation and development of traditional art crafts of Russia and Belarus: history, modernity, prospects” and “Artistic-style and

technical-technological traditions and innovations in creating works of traditional art crafts that are in demand in contemporary society”.



Рис. 2. The plenary session of the forum



Figs. 3, 4. Participants of the International student forum “Culture Unites Us”

Preparing students for participation in the joint competition involved holding an intra-university qualifying round of research papers⁸. The presented reports demonstrated the breadth of students’ research interests and the diversity of directions in traditional applied art studied at the universities.

Within the framework of the first section, issues were discussed regarding the preservation of technological knowledge, local identity, historical and artistic heritage, and the prospects for the development of traditional art crafts. A significant part of the section’s work was occupied by reports from Belarusian students dedicated to preserving local artistic traditions and their contemporary interpretation. D.V. Pavlovich addressed the problem of preserving technological knowledge and local identity in Vitebsk majolica based on oral-historical reconstruction through interviews with a master. P.F. Ragutskaya presented a study on Soviet-period architectural mosaics. N.I. Rybko examined the ceramics of P. Picasso and M. Chagall as a space for artistic dialogue. U.D. Yermochenko revealed the theme

⁸ Regulations for the Joint Student Research and Creative Works Competition with the Russian university of traditional art crafts as part of the International student forum “Culture Unites Us”. – Vitebsk, 2026. – 5 p.

of tradition and modernity in the puppet art of Belarus and Russia. A.A. Aparovich comprehended beadwork traditions as a resource for modern design practices.

Of particular interest were the topics that reflected the connection between Russia's traditional art crafts and contemporary social, economic and educational conditions, as revealed in the reports of students from the Russian university of traditional art crafts: M.A. Medvedev addressed the issue of promoting works of Bogorodskoye wood carving in the digital economy. K.M. Subachyova explored the development of decorative painting in the "Moscow letter" style. E.K. Kobyakova analyzed the dynamics of color palettes in works of Fedoskino lacquer miniature painting from the 19th to 21st centuries. V.A. Polyakova presented the results of a study on the artistic and stylistic features of Rostov enamel works by graduates of the Fedoskino school of miniature painting from the 1960s–1980s. The students' reports showed that their research is oriented not only towards studying artistic heritage but also towards understanding modern mechanisms for its preservation, transmission and development.

The second section was focused on examining the artistic, stylistic and technical-technological traditions and innovations in creating works of traditional art crafts that are in demand in contemporary society. The participants' reports addressed both the issues of preserving artistic traditions and the possibilities for their modern interpretation. K.D. Menzhinskaya presented a study on the traditions and innovations in the textile arts of the Polotsk masters from the folk club "Roshva". M.I. Zakharich explored the modern interpretation of malyavanka painting traditions in the patchwork quilting of Polotsk textile artists. Z.A. Tolkach examined graphic disciplines as a methodological foundation for training artist-teachers. K.E. Korneeva presented the topic of reinterpreting archetypal objects of female domestic life in modern accessory design. E.A. Panova discussed the artistic and technological features of combining hand and machine embroidery when decorating details of modern clothing.

The Russian university of traditional art crafts was represented by the following reports: E.V. Fyodorova – a study on the artistic and technological possibilities of using titanium in creating author's jewelry pieces. S.S. Yerofeeva – research dedicated to master classes on decorative painting "Moscow letter" as a form of mastering and popularizing this artistic tradition. A number of reports presented creative interpretations of historical and cultural heritage: A.A. Izraztsova turned to the artistic legacy of the Mayan civilization as a basis for creating works of art embroidery. L.D. Frolova explored the artistic and imaginative interpretation of Mayan art motifs when developing models of modern clothing with artistic embroidery. D.D. Zausailova presented a study of the monumental plate "The Tale of Tsar Saltan" in the context of the traditions of Mstyora lacquer miniature painting. P.O. Komissarova considered Russian fairy-tale plots as a foundation for creating works of Palekh lacquer miniature painting. A.Yu. Smirnova examined the artistic and figurative principles of designing the souvenir doll "Russia".

It is important that the competition united not only different types of traditional applied arts but also different research approaches: historical-cultural, artistic-stylistic, technical-technological, design-oriented and pedagogical. A logical

continuation of the forum's scientific part was an excursion for participants to familiarize themselves with the artistic and educational environment of the Faculty of fine arts. This allowed them to see how the traditions of art education are preserved and developed within the space of a modern Belarusian university.

The faculty staff provided the guests with a comprehensive and expert introduction to the history of the Vitebsk art school, whose origins date back to the opening of the Vitebsk People's Art School in 1918. Subsequently, the traditions of art education in Vitebsk were continued by the Vitebsk Free State Art Workshops, the Artistic-Practical Institute, the Vitebsk Art Technical School, the Vitebsk Art College and since 1949, the Vitebsk Art and Graphic Pedagogical College. The Faculty of fine arts, established on September 1, 1959, on the basis of this college, became the keeper and continuator of the traditions of the Vitebsk Art School.

A special impression on the forum participants was made by their visit to the Museum of decorative and applied arts, which was created at the Faculty of fine arts in 1986 through the efforts of teachers, workshop masters and students. The museum's exhibition demonstrates a wide range of creative directions represented in the faculty's educational environment: embroidery, tapestry, fabric painting, artistic processing of straw and leather, wood carving, ceramics, patchwork (patchwork quilting), vytynanka (paper cutting), izonit' (thread graphics), model-making and other forms of decorative and applied arts. This part of the program was of particular importance for the students, as it gave them an opportunity to compare different models for preserving and transmitting artistic traditions within the professional education systems of Russia and Belarus.

The excursions to Vitebsk and Polotsk became an important continuation of the forum's cultural and educational program. Visits to architectural monuments, museums and historical sites expanded the participants' understanding of Belarus's historical and cultural heritage, the artistic traditions of the region and the role of cultural memory in contemporary humanities education. This immersion into the historical and cultural environment of these ancient cities demonstrated how an artistic tradition exists within a specific territory, and how it is connected to historical memory, the genius loci (spirit of place), and cultural identity. This experience is especially important for future artists of traditional applied arts.

The students' presentations demonstrated a high level of interest among learners in studying national artistic heritage, as well as their ability to work with historical and artistic materials, analyze works of traditional applied art and publicly present the results of their independent research.

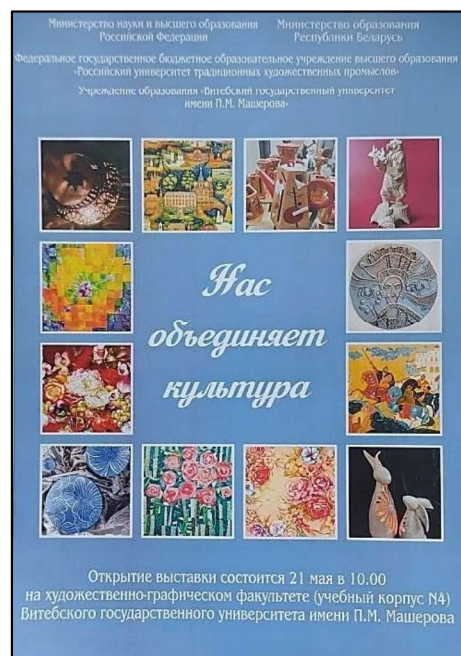


Fig. 5. The exhibition poster "Culture Unites Us"

One of the central events of the forum was the opening of a joint exhibition of creative works by students from the Vitebsk State University named after P.M. Masherov and the Russian university of traditional art crafts, titled “Culture Unites Us”. The exhibition took place on May 21 in the gallery hall of the Faculty of fine arts (Fig. 5). The exhibition allowed for showcasing the results of the artistic and creative activities of students from both universities and revealed the common value-based foundations of professional art education in Russia and Belarus: respect for tradition; attention to material and technology; a commitment to preserving cultural heritage and its contemporary artistic interpretation (Figs. 6, 7).



Рис. 6. The solemn opening of the exhibition
“Culture Unites Us”



Fig. 7. Visitors to the exhibition are reviewing
the art works of the students of the Russian
university of traditional art crafts

The practice-oriented part of the forum was represented by a series of master classes that allowed participants to familiarize themselves with various directions of traditional applied art. The program for the final day included master classes in artistic ceramics (Fig. 8), straw weaving, easel graphics and model-making with laser cutting. The master classes in artistic ceramics and straw weaving revealed the expressive capabilities of traditional materials and manual technologies based on attention to form, texture, plasticity and decorative design. The sessions on easel graphics and model-making with laser cutting, in turn, demonstrated the connection between art education and modern design and technological practices, revealing a wide spectrum of creative practices presented in the educational environment of the Faculty of fine arts.

In turn, representatives of the Russian university of traditional art crafts conducted master classes for Belarusian students in Bogorodskoye wood carving (Fig. 9), lace making and the execution of “scan” – a decorative technique for embellishing Fedoskino items. These master classes were of particular importance because they allowed participants to see traditional applied art not only as an object of scientific research but also as a living artistic and technological practice. In a format of direct demonstration, participants were able to observe the specifics of working with materials, techniques for creating decorative forms and methods for transmitting professional mastery.



Fig. 8. The master class in artistic ceramics is conducted by a teacher from the Vitebsk State University named after P.M. Masherov



Fig. 9. M.A. Medvedev, a student of the Bogorodskoye Institute of artistic wood carving, is demonstrating the techniques of Bogorodskoye wood carving to the master class participants



Fig. 10. The solemn closing ceremony of the forum and the awarding of the competition winners

The International student forum “Culture Unites Us” has confirmed the significance of cooperation between the two universities in the fields of art education, student science and the preservation of traditional artistic crafts (Fig. 10). The forum demonstrated that traditional art crafts are not only an object of preservation but also a living space for contemporary scientific, educational and creative dialogue.