

M.L. Boichuk and the First School of Design in Ukraine

Tamara Zemlyanaya

Department of Engineering Graphics and Computer Design of Southern Federal University,
Rostov-on-Don, Russia

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Abstract: In the first half of the 1920's the school of M. Boichuk played an important role in development of the industrial art education in Ukraine. Today I link the beginning of design development in this country with his name (from the decorative and applied arts forms which were worked out by the school the most popular were decorative textile, decorative ceramics, articles from wood: incrustated tableware, toys and so on). The foundation of fundamental painting school in Ukraine in the XX century is the merit of Mikhail Boichuk.

Key words: Mikhail Boichuk (1882-1937) • School of design • School of monumental art • Decorative textile • Decorative ceramics • Ukrainian graphic design • National style • Industrial art education

INTRODUCTION

The problem of synthesis retaining relevance at the beginning of the 1920's required multidisciplinary knowledge, versatility and universality from the artist in his creative work. For that time all three groups of synthesis were actual: architecture, visual and decorative and applied arts.

Mikhail Lvovich Boichuk (1882-1937) elaborated all three forms, being in touch with different kinds of creative activity - book styling, staging, interior decoration and so on.

The pupils-universalists as the teacher himself worked on the creation of synthetic art of the ensembles of painting, sculpture, architecture, decorative and applied arts.

The idea of the national style renaissance, having folk origins in its grounds, was realized in decorative sculpture and painted dishware. The monumental works in painting which the pupils of M. Boichuk took part were inspired with the same idea - Lutsk barracks (1919), Mezhygorsk technical secondary school of ceramics (1922-1923), Kiev art institute (1924), Odessa sanatorium for peasants (1927-1929), Krasnozavodsky theatre in Kharkiv (1933-1935). Altogether in Ukraine the group of Boichuk painted approximately 20 units [2, p. 164-165].

A big role belongs as it was mentioned earlier to such important fact that the creative work of Boichuk and his pupils was influenced not only by the careful analysis of different patterns of the world monumental art (endnote 1), the monuments of Kievan Rus (mosaics and frescos of the Sofia Kievan monastery, Mikhailovsky monastery), frescos of the ancient Russian art (Novgorod, Moscow) (endnote 2), peculiarities of national Ukrainian culture. Note should be taken to the wideness of his personal contacts. The painter was acquainted with such modern monumental painters as the Mexican Diego Rivera, the Hungarian B. Wits; (with the last he taught in the institute named after I.E. Repin.) [7/4]. He knew well Ukrainian and Russian masters A. Murashko, G. Narbut, A. Manevich, Fyodor and Vasiliy Krichevsky, M. Grushevsky, I. Steshenko, M. Burachek, V. Palmov, K. Redko, K. Malevich, D. Arkin, K. Yuon and others.

For understanding the peculiarities of the artistic order of the monumental art of Boichuk it is very important to note his friendly relationships with metropolitan Andrey Sheptytski during all life who financed not only the abroad education of Boichuk, restoration of some religious paintings, but also creation of new religious frescos.

Being teacher of these educational institutions Boichuk developed his system of teaching which

differed from other art schools of Ukrainian professors F. Krichevsky, L. Kramarenko, V. Palmov and others.

The peculiarities of the pedagogical system and its difference from other art schools consisted in the fact that Boichuk first of all trained and developed the monumental artists. From the very beginning of teaching Boichuk merged the young painter to the world of composition thinking. The further training process and the development of the young artist was under the sign of mastering composition and “deciphering” the nature of the figurative form.

Apart from proficient using of technique the creative process demands from the painter the ability to reach synthesis in architecture. And it is to that moment of no small importance Boichuk-teacher aimed his pupils showing in practice how to make calculations. One of such examples was mentioned by the monumental artist A. Modran in his memoirs: “Having a course in the faculty of arts of the Kiyiv arts institute beginning from 1928 till 1932 I was a member of students brigades taking part in making festive pictures for the 1st of May and October celebrations. These works were led by M. Boichuk. As I remember I was surprised at that time that he, master of soft spiral rhythms, lyrist by nature, never left the ruler and made some calculations on a sheet of paper, making notes on horizontal and vertical sides of the working plane. Later, analyzing the compositions made by Boichuk himself, I was convinced that he not only felt the musical rhythm of the circle, but also excellently knew the laws of the working plane, its harmonic segmentation, which had numerical expression” [5, p. 274].

Having been invited by the director of the Institute of the proletarian visual arts (Institute named after I.E. Repin) Maslov [7/1], Boichuk moves to Leningrad (St. Petersburg) where as a professor he teaches in 1930-1932. The documents are saved in the Central Bibliographic Archive of the Russian Academy of Arts which confirm the activity of Boichuk in the Academic institute named after Repin - the personal record of M.L. Boichuk, the agreement for socialist emulation of the Kiyiv institute of proletarian art culture with the Leningrad institute of proletarian art, programs of the faculty of monumental art, the reports of the methodological meetings of the faculty of monumental art [7].

In the report of the methodological meeting '2 of the faculty of monumental art dated the 1st of October 1930 it is written: “The program on composition of the Monumental and building department was read out by comrade Boichuk” and “It was resolved: under the

responsibility of comrade Boichuk to propose to the leaders to work out the programs: in painting, in drawing, in composition and to submit for final consideration by the 6th of October” [7/4].

It is important that under the direction of Boichuk the programs in painting, in drawing, in composition of the Monumental and building department were elaborated. The subject matter was tune with the demands of that time: “Social upbringing of children”, “Drive for stepped-up work productivity”, “Kolkhoz construction”, “Social construction”, “Everyday life and education of the red army”, “New way of life”, “The red army” and so on [7/3].

For his students Boichuk put a task of the compositional unity of the buildings. The students not only constructed the figure, made sketches, wrote exercises, made compositions taking into consideration the willful usage of the canvas format character, but also carried out the tasks of united design taking into consideration the requirement of that time (a definite club, Cultural center and so on).

Thus, for example, one of the tasks on composition for the 3rd course of the Monumental a building department was “The decision of the gym of the Institute of proletarian visual arts. Filling and organizing the architecture by linear and colourful graphic forms expressing reasonable and healthy rest and study as a persistent term for the development and health improvement of the working class. The elements of physical culture, hygiene, games and entertainment”. The students of the 2nd course were orientated to the monumental design, the 1st task - composition (20 hours) “Physical culture - the vanguard of new life-style” and from the mentioned time 4 hours are for making sketches in the gyms, stadiums and so on, 6 hours - for preliminary drawings, 10 hours - for realization in the technique “painting in oils” [7/3].

It seems not to be by chance that this theme was realized in the murals of his pupil O. Pavlenko “Physical culture and sport” in 1933 in the foyer of Krasnozavodsky theatre in Kharkiv.

It is important to say about the tasks that were being solved by the students of the 3 and 4 course of the Institute named after I.E. Repin under the direction of the teacher such as “Detection of the given premises character according to the purpose and the form of the architectural construction through the composition of the mural /colorful and lighting strikes on distinctive features of architecture, reduction of visual influence of useless parts, obscuring common architectural and pictorial concept/. Conception of linear composition. Limited with

lines form on the working plane as an acting factor of the image. Colour silhouette. Characterization of the material and objects with the help of textural enrichment of the surface. Proportion. Ornamental decision” [7/3].

The tasks were accomplished with watercolours or tempera on cardboard or wood with consideration for doing the same with tempera on the dry plaster.

Thus the students got necessary knowledge and skills under the direction of M. Boichuk with regard to the specific requirements of that time.

How efficient were the successes of Boichuk and his pupils from the Institute of the proletarian visual art is testified by the fact that Boichuk was nominated for the honorary title “Honoured Painter of the RSFSR” in 1932 [11].

Considering his written request [7/1] M. Boichuk leaves the city on the Neva on 15/09/1932 and great work on Krasnozavodsky theatre in Kharkiv begins - the last teamwork of “boichukists” (1933-1935).

In the first half of the 1920's the school of M. Boichuk played an important role in development of the industrial art education in Ukraine. In fact Boichuk was founder of the first and single school of design. It is important that his pupils taught in the ceramic art technical school in Mezhygorsk and Mirgorod, in art technical schools in Kyiv and Kharkiv, in the Kyiv industrial art technical school, studio-school producing toys for children in Mirgorod, in weaving workshops in Dekhtyari, in educational institutions of Moscow and they as their teacher saw the main aim of the school in restoring the Ukrainian national art in different forms including those dictated by the time.

In 1927 being in Paris M. Boichuk and V. Sedlyar visited the ceramic manufacture of Sevres and other manufactures which produced ceramics [12]. Studying the system of industrial art education abroad they got acquainted with Bauhaus - the main centre of functionalism - where such world famous masters as W. Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, V. Kandinski, A. Mayer and others taught. Special desire to connect the activity of art schools with the demands of industry was seen by the Ukrainian painters in France. A great impression was made by the National school of arts and handicrafts with exemplary studios and laboratories and the life organization in it. The Boule school attracted attention where all traditional furniture of France took place. The visit of the tapestry manufacture also impressed V. Sedlyar as a vivid example of respectful attitude to the folk traditions, cautious preserving of these traditions for the following generations [1].



1: Ceramics of "boichukists". The exhibition Ukrainian vanguard: Vasily Sedlyar - the illustrator of "Kobzar" by Taras Shevchenko. The National Art Museum of Ukraine, Kyiv, Grushevsky str., 6 (the 9th of September 2009). Photo by T.Zemlyanaya.



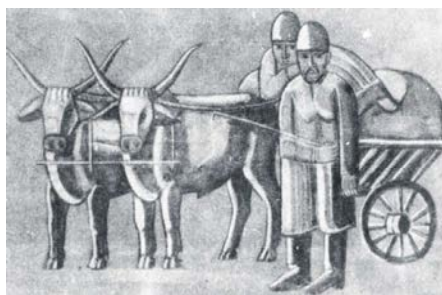
2: Mikhail Lvovich Boichuk (1882-1937) and Vasily Sedlyar (1899-1937).

Having got acquainted with the foreign experience in the decision of the problem of interaction of art and machinery M. Boichuk and V. Sedlyar made a conclusion about the necessity to arrange such an interaction in home art production as it was demanded by new life [9]. After return from abroad and shocked by the organization of educational process in Bauhaus, where the principles of functionalism were already built, Sedlyar wrote the article “New creative school in Germany” [9].

He enthusiastically greeted the innovators in painting who created a school of new type “having united art with industry, found the way for the modern creative



3: Vasily Sedlyar. Liquidation of illiteracy Седляр. 1924-1925. The National Art Museum of Ukraine.



5: Eugen Sagaydachny. Tchoomaks (Ukrainian ox-cart driver). Fresco. Ya. Kravchenko's archive.



4: Ivan Padalka. Still life. 1928. The National Art Museum of Ukraine.

formal achievements into the everyday life through the everyday life objects design, starting from architecture to furniture, tableware, materials and even insignificant everyday things” [9].

Long before the trip to Europe B. Sedlyar together with other pupils of M. Boichuk - O. Pavlenko and I. Padalka - revived ceramics production in Mezhygorie and founded on its basis the ceramic art technical school (1923-1928) and the technological institute of ceramics and glass (1928-1930). One of M. Boichuk's pupils, Sofia Nalepinskaya-Boichuk, supported the idea of interacting of art and industry. More thoroughly this thought sounded in the press a little bit later during her visit to Poland. “Painters of modern left directions in arts, she wrote, at home and abroad, besides different disputable statements have one undeniably right idea, - an organic tie of art with industry. Any everyday object design is the task of a painter-engineer. A painter must organize a thing on the whole, analyzing its significance and creating the form of the object, its design and decoration according to

its purpose, material nature and technology. For such activity new people are needed. One will have to fight against the old art academy, the necessity of creating a school of a new type, industrial art high school, appears” [6].

In the 1920's when the term “design” was not practically in use not only in Ukraine, but in the whole Soviet Union, one of the pupils of M. Boichuk and I. Krichevsky, A. Sayenko, showed himself as a master of innovative art. Just the named teachers directed the young student on the way of mastering the newest Ukrainian art and modern European styles. In the works of A. Sayenko (decorating of the historical section of the all-Ukrainian academy of science, 1928: panels “Kozack Mamay”, “Slaves”) the feeling of ensemble, a complex approach to the decision of monumental decorative tasks became apparent. At first in architecture the decoration of interiors using the technique of mosaic application of straw as a variety of monumental painting was used. “Just here A. Sayenko with great force showed himself a master of composition and a bright colourist, he managed to submit the original technique of straw application to the tasks of painting and monumental decorative picture” - remarked I. Vrona [3].

Alexander Sayenko elaborated the interiors in other genres also (carpets, prints, panels) which appeared to be original and innovative from the point of view of image, plasticity, artistic language. With his works the painter made another step on the way to formation of modern original style of that time where innovation and tradition organically united and the basis was folk art.

In whole graphics, painting, sketches for the carpets, straw application of A. Sayenko and other painters, pupils of M. Boichuk, are a vivid page in the Ukrainian decorative art of the 1920's [4].

In fact the school of Boichuk is not only the history of the monumental art in Ukraine, but of the development of other kinds and genres of art. The great merit of

Boichuk is in the fact that “the boichukists” revived not only monumental painting in Ukraine, but also graphics.

In medias res M. Boichuk, together with G. Narbut, V. Krichevsky, I. Mozalevsky, was one of a few who were on the background of Ukrainian graphic design [10].

In the first half of the 1920's the school of M. Boichuk played a very important role in the development of the industrial art education in Ukraine, which from the one hand was very close and understandable to the creative concept of the founder of “boichukism” and from the other hand it corresponded with the ideas of time reflected in the theory of “industrialists”.

Nowadays educational and exhibitivе activity which tells about the creative work of M. Boichuk and his school is carried on in Ukraine. After the repairs of the building of the National Art Museum of Ukraine in Kiyiv on the second floor the exposition devoted to the creative work of “Boichukists” is open again, from 11 till 20 of September 2009 this museum carried out the exhibition “The unknown pages of Ukrainian vanguard. Vasily Sedlyar - the illustrator of “Kobzar”; 74 items from different archives and private collections were exhibited, the curators are Irina Vozyanova and Leonid Finberg [8].



6: Opening of the exhibition Ukrainian vanguard: Vasily Sedlyar - the illustrator of "Kobzar" by Taras Shevchenko. The National Art Museum of Ukraine, Kiyiv, Grushevsky str., 6 (the 9th of September 2009). Photo by T.Zemlyanaya.

Endnotes:

- Creative trip to Europe: France, Germany, - November 1926 - May 1927.
- All facts are confirmed by the materials of private correspondence of Boichuk: letters to M.S. Grushevsky, S.A. Nalepinskaya-Boichuk.

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