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Improving The Methodology Of Teaching Classical Still Life And Portrait Painting In Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the urgent issues of improving the methodology of teaching classical still life and portrait painting in the fine arts faculties of higher education institutions from a scientific-pedagogical perspective. The author proposes methodological recommendations for integrating the traditional academic education system with the demands of the digital age, as well as for fostering spatial thinking, constructive analysis, and painterly perception in students. The article substantiates the importance of deeply studying the fundamental principles of the classical drawing and painting school - specifically anatomy, perspective, and color theory - as well as the utilization of short-term sketches and innovative pedagogical technologies in the practical process.

Keywords:

Academic drawing, classical still life, portrait art, methodology, fine arts education, spatial thinking, constructive analysis, coloristics, pedagogical technologies .

The training of highly qualified specialists in the field of fine arts in higher education institutions is one of the most pressing pedagogical and creative issues of the present day. After all, the shaping of society's aesthetic taste and the expression of national and universal values through artistic imagery depend directly on the competence of professional artists and art educators. In the system of fine arts education, the methodology of working on classical still life and portraiture -the foundation of the academic school of drawing and painting - holds a unique, fundamental significance. These two genres not only develop a student's spatial imagination, sense of form, volume, light-shadow, and color relationships, but also cultivate the ability to analyze the environment and human

psychology from a philosophical-aesthetic perspective. However, in modern educational conditions, in an era of rapidly increasing digital technology and visual information flow, there is a need to improve the traditional classical methodology not merely as a set of rigid rules, but as a flexible, scientifically grounded system that serves to unlock the student's individual creative potential. From this point of view, it is scientifically and practically vital to rethink the process of working on still life and portraiture in universities by integrating it with cognitive psychology, the laws of visual perception, and advanced pedagogical technologies.

The methodology of teaching classical still life is the initial and most important stage in forming a student's visual literacy. In academic

education, a still life is not just a collection of inanimate objects, but a universal laboratory for studying spatial structure, materiality, light, and compositional balance. As the renowned art historian and pedagogue N.N. Rostovtsev noted in his work "History and Methodology of Academic Drawing", "Without mastering still life, it is impossible to understand and depict more complex objects, particularly the human figure, because all complex forms lie at the foundation of simple geometric solids". Unfortunately, in many educational institutions, working on a still life often turns into the passive copying of the outer shell and surface of objects. The first step in improving the methodology should be to transform students from passive observers of objects into active analytical researchers. For this, the method of "constructive-structural analysis" must be brought to the center of the educational process. Before depicting each object, the student is required to consciously construct its internal framework, its position in space, its axis lines, and its relationship with the plane upon which it is placed. Exercises in linear-constructive drawing that take into account the hidden parts of objects develop a student's spatial thinking. In this process, the theories of form integrity and the balance of centrifugal and centripetal forces put forward by R. Arnheim in his work "Art and Visual Perception" yield high efficiency when introduced into pedagogical practice. The student must learn to see every detail in a still life as an integral part of the overall composition and to express the air space (aerial-spatial perspective) between objects using lines and tones.

Improving the methodology of painting in still life also requires a distinct approach. In traditional teaching, color is often expressed with local (base) paint, resulting in a flat and lifeless piece of art. As deeply analyzed in N.N. Volkov's fundamental work "Color and light", in the art of painting, color is always a dynamic phenomenon that changes under the influence of light, the environment, and the reflections of surrounding objects. In higher education methodology, it is necessary to teach students

holistic coloristic vision and to direct them toward finding the complex color relationships (color palette) in nature rather than mechanically mixing paints on a palette. The ability to feel the warm-cold contrast between the illuminated and shaded parts of an object and to perceive the subtlety of color transitions in halftones are the cornerstones of classical painting. Therefore, it is proposed to increase exercises for working on still life under various lighting sources (natural light, cold or warm artificial light, contrasting light). Additionally, to enhance students' ability to feel the material, it is effective to develop specific assignments on the comparative analysis of reflection (highlight) and absorption properties of objects with different textures such as glass, metal, fabric, and wood, combined in a single composition. By applying the laws of color harmony and contrast from Johannes Itten's book "The art of color" in practice, students will more deeply master the secrets of achieving emotional impact in still life composition. In the research of Uzbek scholars B. Oripov, S. Abdirasilov, and B. Baymetov on fine arts methodology, it is also emphasized that setting up still lifes based on national color, samples of traditional Uzbek applied arts (pottery, metalwork, textiles) serves to help the student understand their national identity and create a unique school of painting.

In the academic education system, the methodology of working on a human portrait is a stage following still life that requires much more complex intellectual, visual, and mental preparation. The genre of portraiture requires the artist not only to have perfect anatomical knowledge and an accurate sense of form and proportion but also to reveal the model's inner world, psychological state, and personality through the depiction. The main factor in improving the methodology of portrait work in higher education is starting with the strict and consistent study of the anatomy of the human skull and facial muscles. As the great Russian pedagogue and artist P.P. Chistyakov stated: "Painting is a high-level mathematics; here everything is based on laws, nothing is accidental". According to Chistyakov's system,

depicting a human head must consist of perceiving it as a sum of connected planes (facets) and understanding how they form spatial volume through light and shadow. Today, in some educational processes, students bypass the anatomical structure and directly move to “drawing” the external details of the face-eyes, nose, lips-separately. This is an absolutely incorrect approach, resulting in applicative, superficial, static, and lifeless images. To eliminate this problem, it is mandatory to introduce a methodology of direct integration of the subject of plastic anatomy with practical drawing classes in higher education curricula. The hours allocated for analytical drawing of the *écorché* (a model of a human head with muscles exposed) and skull models from different angles must be increased. The process of drawing portraits from plaster casts of antique and Renaissance sculptures such as Homer, David, or Gattamelata remains the ideal methodological step not only for understanding classical beauty but also for studying the geometric solution of facial forms.

The process of painting a portrait from nature (from a live model) requires an even deeper pedagogical approach. Here, the main goal of the methodology is to teach the student to correctly perceive the individual peculiarities (typical and characteristic features) of the human face within the framework of anatomical laws. Teaching the student to see the connection of the human head's framework (construction) alongside the neck and shoulder girdle is of methodological importance. The change of the head along vertical and horizontal axes, the laws of symmetry and asymmetry, the placement of the eye sockets, and the division of the face into anterior and lateral planes are the alphabet of portrait art. In painting, improving the methodology for portraiture comes down to the task of correctly finding the complex shades of skin and *carnation* (the color of human skin). Skin color does not consist of a single paint; beneath it lie blood vessels, muscles, and bone structures, which give the color a complex interplay of warm-cold changes, blue, yellowish, pink, and

red tones. Experience from the masters of the Renaissance to the academic school of the present day shows that light-shadow relationships and color transitions in a portrait are the most powerful means of expressing psychological states. In the teaching process, extensive use of the “grisaille” method (working in various tones of a single color) yields very good results by focusing the student's attention not on the diversity of color, but on tone relationships and volume. The grisaille style mastered in the initial stages creates a solid foundation for avoiding errors when later transitioning to full-scale polychrome painting. At the same time, artistic thinking can be expanded by assigning students the task of deeply analyzing (not by copying, but by analysis) the works of great masters of Russian and world art V. Serov, I. Repin, Rembrandt, Velázquez as well as People's Artists of Uzbekistan R. Ahmedov, A. Abdullayev, and Chingiz Ahmarov, from a compositional, coloristic, and technological perspective.

Another vital direction in improving the methodology is revitalizing the system of working on short-term sketches, drafts, and studies (*études*). Usually, in higher education institutions, the main focus is on long-term (30-40 hour) academic setups. This, of course, develops deep observational skills, perseverance, and technical finish. However, working only on long-term works can “stiffen” a student's eye and extinguish their initial impressions and emotions. The skill of quickly capturing momentary changes, movement, and character on paper cultivates the sharp inquisitiveness necessary for creating long-term work. The methodology should be designed so that many short-term studies are carried out around each main task. For example, before drawing a single main portrait, dozens of graphic sketches of the model in various states (laughing, sad, thoughtful) should be done, and the character should be sought in pencil, sanguine, or charcoal. Only then does the student turn from a mechanical copier into a creative artist. In this stage, the graphic views of A.A. Deyneka and V.A.

Favorsky regarding the rhythm of lines and surfaces and the effective use of the white paper space serve as methodological aids. Making sketches develops in the student a lack of fear of the model, freedom of the hand, and, most importantly, the ability of "holistic vision" prioritizing the large parts of the face over small details.

When talking about improving the methodology of working on still life and portraiture in higher education institutions based on innovative approaches, it is necessary to acknowledge that the role of the pedagogue must fundamentally change. The teacher should no longer act only as a controller who corrects mistakes, but as a master-coach who directs the student's creative ability. To achieve this, the master class method must be regularly applied in lessons, meaning that the master's direct demonstration of drawing and painting from an object before the students' eyes should become an integral part of the methodology. The secrets of artistry are not passed down only through words, but mainly through the movement of the pencil and brush on the paper or canvas and the process of mixing paints. Instead of the approach "I explained to you how to do it", the priority should be the rule: "Come, let me show you how to work, not on your piece, but on a separate canvas". The teacher's direct interference in a student's work drawing over it can sometimes lower the student's sense of responsibility and deprive them of freedom. Therefore, it is the highest pedagogical skill to lead the student to the correct solution through logical questions and comparative analyses so that the student understands and corrects the mistakes themselves. The psychological-pedagogical views of V.S. Kuzin and E.E. Rijkova regarding the fine arts teaching system also emphasize the development of independent control and aesthetic evaluation in the student. By organizing mutual discussion classes and creative reviews, and teaching students to openly analyze the achievements and shortcomings in each other's work, their artistic speech and critical thinking are developed. This guarantees that a young

specialist who graduates from a higher education institution will become not only a good artist but also a mature art historian and a skillful teacher.

In the matter of improving classical education, providing students with full information about modern art materials and technologies also enriches the methodology. Although the foundation remains in classical methods, using different types of grounds, mixed techniques (combined methods), and the unique possibilities of paints such as acrylic and tempera as experiments during still life and portrait work expands the scope of creative inquiry. In art academies, it is required that the multi-layered painting technology of the Renaissance (glazing techniques) and the light-shadow principles of the Flemish and Italian schools be taught as special tasks. For instance, while a student creates a still life in the *vanitas* (philosophical content) genre, they should know in which layer the light sits, how to create an illusion of materiality with semi-transparent paints, and how to apply these secrets later to a complex human portrait. All graphic and painting tools are essentially weapons that turn human imagination into reality, and the more thoroughly they are mastered, the more convincing and impactful the image becomes. In this regard, it should be noted that while the laws of artistic creation are objective, their perception is subjective. The higher education methodology must serve to find the golden mean between strictly teaching those objective laws (perspective, anatomy, color theory) and preserving and developing the subjective, personal attitude in the student. Classical methodology is not a tool for casting into a mold, but rather the foundation needed to break through the molds.

In conclusion, improving the methodology of teaching classical still life and portrait painting in higher education institutions does not mean merely updating curricula, but applying a logical, deeply analytical, and psychological approach to the entire educational process and the teacher-student relationship. Designing the path from simple geometric shapes to the expression of complex human psychology

based on systematic sequencing, and developing spatial, constructive, and coloristic thinking in students in parallel, is the main criterion of modern education. In the Uzbek education system, by preserving the achievements of the world classical school and nurturing it with the rich cultural heritage of our people, national traditions, and modern pedagogical technologies, it is possible to train highly qualified, deep-thinking artists and future teachers who are true masters of their craft and hold a worthy place in the world. Achieving the unity of theory and practice, scientific analysis and emotional experience, and academic rigor and creative freedom on this path is the most honorable and responsible strategic task facing the art and fine arts education faculties of universities.

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