

Russian Visual Art Criticism, 1800-1913
Primary text in Translation

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Inaugural lecture read by Professor of Art History A.V. Prakhov
in the Imperial Academy of Arts, 16 October 1875¹

Dear Sirs,

Coming before you for the first time in this Department, it seems to me that I cannot begin our acquaintance any better than by inviting you to recollect with gratitude my predecessor, who devoted so many of the best years of his life to the study and teaching of our science. The name of I.I. Gornostaev² will remain forever one of the best adornments of the annals of the Academy of Arts; the scholarly legacy left by him will serve as our starting point for the further development of our subject and for improvements in the method of teaching it. If more than a few slips are to be found in the departed's scholarly work, if the last years of his teaching activity did not distinguish themselves by that fire and energy which he brought to it at the start, then we shall not be haughty, but will rather remember that we too will at some point have to finish in our walk of life, we will not forget that each of us is only a small link in an immense chain which began long before us, and which will continue when our grandchildren are no longer in the world; we will console ourselves, on his behalf as well as on our own, with the great saying, 'life is short, but science and art are everlasting'.

Dear sirs, we have gathered here for the sake of art, and for that reason we understand each other without difficulty. We have no need to ask the question of why art exists. For us, the answer is in our own hearts. For some of us it shines like a guiding star to

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² Ivan Ivanovich Gornostaev (1821-74), teacher of the fine arts, aesthetics and archaeology in the Academy of Arts. .

glory, for others it is a good friend, a cherished being, with whom it is impossible to part, and which warms and cast light upon us, like an inner sun - how dark life would be if we did not carry this sun within us! But we have come together not directly for the sake of life in art and through art, nor for the pleasure of it alone: we intend to investigate how millions of people over thousands and thousands of years have warmed themselves around this same artistic hearth: in a word, we shall study the history of art.

In this, however, we cannot ignore the question 'why'? What benefit does this study bring us as artists? Can we not simply get by with our personal talent alone, and is it not pointless to spend time unearthing the dust-laden monuments of bygone centuries?

Each of us, dear sirs, is an enigma on this earth: external influences are essential in order to resolve this enigma, in order to break through our inner slumber, and in order to call to action those abilities placed within us. In order to begin *to think*, i.e. to distinguish and bring together ideas, we must already have those ideas, and for those to take shape within us we must receive impressions from the outside world. Thus, precisely in order to arouse those abilities which make an artist of a man, it is essential for us to receive stimulating impressions.

In this way we draw close to the key question, which is, namely, *what does that ability consist of which makes an artist of a man?* Without having resolved this or having explained to ourselves our understanding of an artist and of a work of art, we are not capable of answering other questions, including the question raised by us above on the use of studying the history of art. The answer will not be difficult for us, for all each of us has to do is look within himself, and to remember in what way the first movements of artistic instinct were discovered within us. Each of you, dear sirs, will remember this about himself: I must, immodestly, recall my personal experience aloud.

My early childhood passed in a provincial backwater, in the spacious surroundings of fruit orchards, harvests and haymaking. I remember those wondrous evenings after the haymaking, when bonfires were lit in fragrant meadows on the bank of a fast-moving, swirling stream; the mowers, the masters, and children would all gather in a circle and set about their simple unpretentious supper. While the other children, my peers, were busy romping about the fire, I - as hungry as the others - would forget about supper and would be unable to tear my eyes from the sun setting over the river, or from the mist which was

starting to emerge from behind the somnolent bushes and which floated like translucent smoke along the twinkling stream. For a long time I would dream of such an evening, and then, I remember, there appeared the desire to *reproduce* the impression made upon me.

Is it not true that in each of us the first wish to *reproduce* appeared as a consequence of a strong impression made upon us by something exceptional? I am sure that, on hearing my words, something similar flashed by in each of your memories: for one, a storm striking a neighbouring settlement, after which a fiery column suddenly reached up into the skies; for another, a person's face of unusual beauty; for a third, some sort of passionate outburst which adds wondrous delight, even to the most ordinary facial features. And later the artistic instinct is awakened in exactly the same way, and now every time one of us sees an astonishing phenomenon, there is aroused in us the wish immediately to depict it, either by rendering it in paint or by fashioning it in clay.

At such a moment each of us experiences within himself precisely that same awakening, that instinct, which leads to the creation of works of art and which makes an artist of a man. *This awakening consists in the desire to seize and secure, from ever-changing reality, the phenomenon which has astonished us, by whatever means possible.*

But will all phenomena which impress a man and inspire him to capture them inevitably lead him to *purely* artistic activity? After all, the anatomist dissecting a corpse who suddenly comes across some sort of anomaly within it will also make efforts so that his discovery is not lost, and will either make a model of it as a valuable rarity, or will draw a copy of it. Will he then be an artist in that case where he himself makes the copy? Of course not! In such a case what inspires him to secure this exceptional phenomenon he has encountered is nothing other than the search for truth: this phenomenon is valuable to him only because it brings some new fact into the sphere of knowledge, and consequently, his activity even in this case belongs fully in the sphere of science and does not concern art. It follows that, of the stock of astonishing phenomena, we must above all exclude all those which astound man's scientific instincts and which inspire his striving for truth. Let us take another example. Will a portrait done of a prominent criminal in order to seek him out in the event of his escape be a work of art, if it is used specifically as a tool of justice? No! The portrait is made with a practical aim, in order to assist in the administration of justice. It

follows that it arises from the instinct for justice and good: consequently, it belongs in the ethical sphere and does not enter into the sphere of art.

At the most we can use the term 'applied art' of a copy from an anatomical preparation made for science, and a portrait of a criminal made for justice, and in similar circumstances we usually say that art comes *to the assistance* of science and justice.

All such works must consequently be excluded from the ranks of the purely artistic, and in fact in such an instance it is not even necessary to call upon art for assistance: craft can fully satisfy our requirements - an anatomical preparation can be formed out of clay, the face of a criminal can be photographed. It is no longer necessary that these needs be met by calling a man to a form of activity which is neither scientific nor practical but which is purely artistic.

What aspect of a phenomenon, then, should entice a person so that he arrives at an *artistic* result, if scientific or moral interests do not lead to such a result?

Each of us can answer that question: only through being attracted *by the beauty and perfection of form* of the phenomenon, as well as all other impressions, will he be able to arrive at a work of art in the true meaning of the word, a work which is capable of satisfying our artistic, or aesthetic, instincts.

Consequently, the source of art is an interest in the perfection of form, in beauty, and it is the desire to secure from ever-changing reality, by whatever means possible, the phenomenon which has astonished us. The ability by means of which we preserve in ourselves the image we have received until it is reproduced is *artistic memory*, or the memory of beautiful forms.

But once this ability is awakened, once the memory is filled with beautiful phenomena, then it acts independently within a person, without need of constant external stimulation, just as our eye possesses the ability to experience the sensation of light when light is completely absent. Separate, primary instances of beauty which a person receives from without can be combined in complex images, that is to say, they can crystallise around a particular nucleus and as a result make forms which are completely new and idiosyncratic. We call this ability to combine elementary instances of the beautiful into complex wholes *the imagination*.

And the main, and highest ability of the artist is *the imagination*, which alone makes an artist of a man.

To be an artist does not mean to be able coldly and indifferently to imitate reality: for this there is photography in the graphic arts, and mould craftwork in the plastic arts. To be an artist means to have the ability to fall in love, to become passionately attached to instances of beauty, and, with the help of the imagination, to re-work them from within oneself and to objectify this inner process in forms accessible to the gaze.

Let us turn our attention to those artists whom history has called '*the great masters*', and recall the works of Michelangelo, Raphael, Leonardo, and Titian - do they represent nature as it is, in its prosaic nakedness?! Never! Without exception their works are imprinted with their personal taste, which made them select similar elements of the beautiful and take from nature only that which corresponded with their inner idea of the beautiful. Therein lies the particularity of the *style* of each of them, and the higher the artistic gift, the more strongly is nature tinged as it passes through the artist's imagination.

But to have imagination and taste alone, however strong they might be, does not mean to be an artist. One must also be able to express the image they create. For this one must study a great deal. All of you, dear sirs, know from your own experience that one's neighbour is the best teacher: if a group of people work together, each does better than if he worked alone, for each neighbour shows him something he has not noticed. If such assistance is offered by one's comrades and peers, then what immense benefit should come of being in the vicinity of the great comrades, the works of the great masters. They arouse the imagination and assist in the expression of the forms created by it. Not for nothing did the forefather of the new art, Jacques Louis David³, pass on to his pupils the following precept amongst other precious maxims: 'select images from the great masters according to your taste, study them as hard as you can, and then forget them, and sit down before nature and copy her as naively as children do, as if you were copying a painting, and you will see what perfection comes out from under your hands'.

But this would lead only to the general, unsystematic study of old works of art according to one's selection and taste. Above all, our innate demand to place everything we

³ Jacques Louis David (1748-1825), leading French neo-classical artist.

have assimilated into order according to an agreed principle - the demand for systematising and classification - leads a man who is interested in art towards systematic study, towards the *history* of art. This in itself is a scientific impulse, and he who succumbs to it will be a scientist. But even for those who, like you, dear sirs, do not intend to dedicate themselves to scientific investigation, the *history* of art is a valuable means of avoiding one-sidedness, extremeness of views, and errors. So as not to take distant and complex examples of this, let us look at a simple example which is close to each of our hearts.

It is well known that at the end of the last century something akin to a *second renaissance* in the education and art of the ancient world took place. The fruit of this renaissance was the '*classical*' style, brought into fashion by the French painter David. Thanks to the pre-eminence of France in the world of learning, this classical style which was introduced through the despotic will of the artist, placed its yoke on the art of Europe as a whole, and even of the entire world. From that time on the preachers of new learning in art, the classicists, who seized power in their hands, began to persecute any other direction as soon as it appeared, declaring it to be art's decline and abasement. There is no offensive name by which they did not label the innovators, there were no measures which classicism would not have taken to suppress the 'romantics' and 'realism', its two consecutive opponents. Thus, half a century passed in enmity between different movements in art. Meanwhile, from the point of view of art history, this enmity - which, as you know, was present amongst us as well - turns out to be a host of mutual misunderstandings. David belonged to that generation of European society which, for well-known historical reasons, broke its connection with historical traditions (in which they saw only evil), and which decided, having condemned any sort of education (in the person of Rousseau), to return, whatever happened, to '*primitivism*', to the sincerity and truth of the primitive human condition. In our opinion, this generation should have turned either to savages directly, or, if it was too far to get to them, to domestic savages, i.e., to the primordial popular masses, still untouched by education. But historical habits, however much shunned by the then-current generation, were too strong, and instead of taking such a simple and natural step, it went along another path and, searching in that same history for a similar *primordial* era, located it in the classical world and decided, whatever happened, to make itself, i.e. to *pretend* to be, a contemporary of that era. Thus the quest for 'primitivism' and 'sincerity' led first and

foremost to a *classical sham*. The falsity of this act could not of course be concealed for long, and David, the head of this movement, had not even died before people appeared who loudly began to expose the unnaturalness of the movement and who declared that 'primitivism', or as they put it, '*naivete*', must be sought not in the classical world but in the middle ages, in the era of naïve Christianity. In their turn they proposed to *pretend* to be the contemporaries of the catholic era of the Middle Ages. Not for long, of course. Thus, having decided to renew itself and to make itself primordial and naïve, European society experienced two shams: '*classical*' and '*romantic*', until they finally realised, in the persons of the realists, that there was no need to go quite so far for naivete and truth.

We, the descendants of these generations, are already able to look from the historical point of view, and in our time enmity between the classicists, romantics, and realists is unthinkable, and the very names themselves should be consigned to the archive of history.

One example of this is sufficient to show you, dear sirs, how important the study of the *history* of art is as a firm base underlying the evaluation of discrete artistic facts and entire movements.

I draw your attention to the practical side of our science, to its *application*. Since I do not intend to make scientists of you - no - I would wish:

firstly, to give you a store of varied artistic impressions, from which each of you could select some sort of material close to himself, and thus, having recognised himself in what is alien, then seek out his own path all the more quickly and decisively;

secondly, I wish rationally to satisfy your need systematically to organise this material, and;

thirdly, to help you in this way to look from a historical point of view, the sole true viewpoint for the evaluation of works of art and of entire movements, and for the resolution, so to speak, of the rivalries between these movements.

Having defined the significance of the history of art for the artist in general terms, we shall try more precisely to limit, or rather, to demarcate, the sphere of the three sciences which stand extremely closely and which work through identical material, but from three different points of view.

There was a time when the monuments of art were regarded as antiquity, and material from which it was possible to derive some information or other about the religion, the morals and customs, the laws and mental development of a particular people and a particular era. It followed that works of art were regarded as illustrating the history of all other aspects of the human spirit than the very one to which they were obliged for their birth: i.e., artistic ability.

That was the era of the *antiquarians*.

Such a view dominated from the beginnings of artistic-historical endeavours from the Greeks and Romans right up to the seventeenth century.

But if we see nothing more in monuments of art than an illustration of history, nothing more than material for our understanding of the religion, morals, mental development of a given people in a given era, then in that case the Sistine Madonna would have to be ascribed to the history of theology, and the majority of paintings by Delaroche to the history of criminal practice, and so on.

Clearly, such a view is one-sided. Every work of art is a monument of its era not only in the sense that it indicates what the appearance, morals and customs in such-and-such a time were. No, it is a monument of the era in another, more specialised sense of the word: it also demonstrates the extent of development of *artistic ability* in a given era and amongst a given people. To regard the work of art from such a viewpoint is to be concerned with the history of the development of artistic ability, or with *the history of art*.

Hence the history of art is the history of the development of artistic ability, i.e., of the understanding and reproduction of the beautiful in the circumstances of a particular people and time.

But that same material, those same works of art, can also be viewed as monuments, as a fleeting impression of all other aspects of civilisation. The science which is concerned with this bears the name *the archaeology of art*.

Finally, to these two sciences - of which one is concerned with the explanation of the *real* aspect of the work of art, while the other examines the *consequent change of the forms themselves in the circumstances of a particular people and time* - a third may be added, which examines these very forms relative to their absolute aesthetic worth, relative to *the ideal*. You will guess that I am speaking of the *theory* of art.

Is it not now clear to you that the three sciences which comprise the department in which I have the honour of appearing before you, are united not by chance or whim, but are linked, each to the other, by inner necessity, as the mutually-enriching investigations of three different aspects of one and the same subject?

I think that it will not be out of place to sketch out before you now a general history of the study of our science.

Artistic-historical investigations first reached the level of scholarly research, or of science, on the basis of the material of the classical art of antiquity.

The study of antique art began already in classical antiquity itself. The first sort of such investigations were notes applied to the plans of buildings such as temples. Such notes began to appear from the sixth century BC onwards. Originally these were purely technical notes, to which, with time, historical-artistic information was added. All essays written about art by the artists themselves, almost without exception, in the course of the entire independent existence of the Greek republics, were of this sort. Historical endeavours, in the true sense of the word, did not yet exist, and for understandable reasons: this was the height of the era of creativity, when all strength was harnessed directly to activity in one or other field: the observation of this activity occurred only later, in this era of the decline of artistic creation. The Alexandrine era is a notable boundary-marker in this instance.

On the boundary between Greek art, in the true sense of the word, and Roman art, i.e. Greek art again, but on Roman soil, there stands a remarkable individual, the main activist of the so-called 'ancient Renaissance'. I am talking about the sculptor Pasiteles⁴ born in Great Greece, and contemporary with Pompeii the Great. After a two-century decline in Greek art, the school which gathered around this artist again begins the great (albeit only externally) era of Roman art by linking the tradition with the era when the Greek plastic arts flourished, and even in part with the preceding, so-called archaic school.

The break with the present and the conscious orientation towards the civilisation of bygone eras is a fact which constantly characterises all eras of renaissance: we have come across it many times.

⁴ Pasiteles, a Greek-born sculptor granted Roman citizenship in 89 BCE. The most important member of the Neo-Attic school of sculpture in the time of Julius Caesar.

But this conscious orientation towards the past as to something better, already presupposes a choice, an evaluation, and consequently a critical relationship to a given host of instances - this is the second characteristic fact: all eras of renaissance are always accompanied by an intensification of scholarly activity, and in the history of our science the most important work relates precisely to such eras.

With regard to the time of which we speak now, there is one other fact which seems to hint that this same artist who played such an important role in the 'ancient renaissance' worked for it not only with his chisel, but with his *style*, or, as we would say, with his *pen*: a five-book collection of essays, *On the Most Important Works of Art in the World* (hence a form of universal art history) is ascribed to Pasiteles .

Yet another, extremely important genus stands alongside such essays, comprising even to this day one of the most important sources of our information about classical art: these are the notes of ancient travellers, of verbose wayfarers, which included everything seen or heard by them: in this way a mass of information about ancient art also turned up. The most important of these were the following two: *Polemon*,⁵ of whose essays only fragments remain, and *Pausanias*,⁶ a traveller who has reached us whole in nine books under the title *Description of Greece*.

Finally, an even more particular form of writings on art were *epigrammatic* and *rhetorical* exercises, in which works of art were grandiloquently praised and described.

Literature about art in Greece was of this type.

With the subjugation of Greece and the transportation of masses of works of art to Italy, there appeared a passion for collection, for galleries and museums, amongst the Roman nobility. This produced the demand and fashion for being a connoisseur. Such connoisseurs, whose ability lay in guessing the name of the artist when the work was unsigned (non inscriptis auctorem reddere signis), were called '*thinkers*' (intelligentes). Non-connoisseurs were called '*idiots*' (idiotae), non-thinkers. As the material grew, simple connoisseurs turned into scholarly collectors, the first Roman historians of art, amongst whom the famous *Pliny*⁷ played the leading role. But it is specifically from his example that we can see the superficial

⁵ Most likely Polemon Periegetes, lived at the beginning of 2nd century CE. Eminent geographer and Stoic philosopher.

⁶ Pausanias, 2nd-century CE geographer and traveller, and author of *Description of Greece* [Periegesis Hellados]. Prakhov calls the work 'Puteshestvie po Gretsii' (Travels around Greece).

way in which the science of art was discussed in the Roman era. He placed all his information in this field in an essay on natural history (*Historia Naturalis*), breaking it up under such rubrics as these: where he talks about stones he adds a chapter about the working of stone (including stone, i.e. marble, sculpture) at the end; where he speaks about metals, he lists in chronological order the most important casters, engravers, and gold- and silversmiths and their works.

The most important scholarly essay on art which has been left to us from the ancient world after Pausanias and Pliny is *Vitruvius*'⁸ writings on architecture in ten books, precisely as a piece which is more theoretical, but which is scattered with historical remarks.

And thus in the ancient, classical world, all writing on art was restricted either to theoretical essays which were predestined either to be direct guides in the execution of any branch of art, or to be a superficial collection of discrete historical data.

It is extraneous to say that in the first era of the triumph of Christianity there could be no question of a theoretical study of art, which then seemed to people of that time to be a *pagan* product, and therefore aroused only hate and the desire for its total extermination.

The first concerns about ancient art and the first compositions about it appear at the dawn of the 'Renaissance'. In the fourteenth century, after a lengthy series of 'dark' centuries characterised by inner and outer disorder, a universal interest and regard for the classical world is born, particularly in Italy.

By this time the Italian population, after a long struggle, had settled at last into a form in which it felt relatively safe, and there emerged specifically urban life, in the form of co-habitation of the nobles and the citizens (*borghesi*) as factually equal elements of a new society. This new society, inspired by ideas of freedom and glory, already had leisure and means, and therefore felt the need for higher education. With all the ardour of his newly-awakened needs, the person of those times turned towards the ancient world, since for some time the learning of that world was almost all that the new learning contained.

This, then, was when the monuments of art became the valued covenants of the past, when people began to concern themselves with their preservation, and with which,

⁷ Pliny the Elder (23-79 CE), author of *Natural History*.

⁸ Marcus Vitruvius Pollio (90-20 CE), author of *On Architecture (De Architectura)*.

inevitably, scholarly research also became linked. After a host of jeremiads about the pitiful condition of ruins and of other artistic monuments, there began a whole host of descriptions and attempts mentally to restore the former exteriors of Italy's most important cities. Both of these found their most dazzling expression in Raphael's famous letter to Pope Leo X,⁹ where he entreats the Pope to concern himself with antiquity and demonstrates the means of distinguishing classical art from the later Barbaric excrescences, and where, as a result, he outlines a comparative history of art and offers methods for the study and maintenance of architectural monuments, demanding that a plan, section and elevation be compiled for each building.

Of the descriptions of Roman monuments the most important were the compositions of Poggio¹⁰; and Biondi Forli¹¹, Andrea Fulvio¹², Adrianus Junius¹³, and Fulvius Ursinus¹⁴ were the first to receive the name of antiquarians.

But during this time a new art appeared, in the person of Michelangelo, Raphael and other of their contemporaries, and, once it stood on a level with ancient art, it too inspired its own historians and researchers. The most important composition about this new Italian art of the Renaissance was that of Michelangelo's pupil, Giorgio Vasari, which bore the title *The Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*.¹⁵

From this time the scholarly study of these two great eras of art proceeds hand in hand, with the distinction that the science of the classical art of antiquity nevertheless exceeds the study of the era of the 'Renaissance'.

In the field of this classical art, historical-artistic investigation was, I have said earlier, fated to raise itself to the level of science and to become the prototype of all other scholarly investigations of the same sort. This took place in the era of the third

⁹ A reference to the letter to Pope Leo X (Giovanni de Medici, pope from 1513-21) written by Raphael in his capacity as surveyor of the monuments of Rome.

¹⁰ Poggio Bracciolini (1380-1459). Italian humanist and historian. Author of the four-volume *De Varietate Fortunae*, the first volume of which describes the ruins of Rome.

¹¹ Biondi Forli (Flavio Biondo, 1388-1463). Italian archaeologist and historian. One of the founders of the science of archaeology.

¹² Andrea Fulvio (c.1440-1527). Italian antiquary and writer, author of *Antiquaria urbis*, an encomium to Rome.

¹³ Adrianus Junius was the Latinised version of his name adopted by the Dutch Renaissance scholar Aadrian De Jonghe (1511-75), author of one of the most important of sixteenth-century books, *Nomenclator omnium rerum* (1567).

¹⁴ Fulvius Ursinus (Fulvio Orsino, 1529-1600). Antiquarian and librarian, author of numerous philological, historical and antiquarian studies.

‘Renaissance’, in the second half of last century, through the efforts of English, French and German scholars.

The three centuries which preceded this new regeneration of interest in ancient civilisation and art are the era of the *antiquarians*, the era when artistic monuments were treated as an illustration of history and were published in enormous folios through the efforts of the Italians and the French. Of the many activists of that era it is enough mention two in order to characterise the rest: I have in mind Montfaucon,¹⁶ with his colossal piece ‘Antiquity Explained and Represented In Sculptures’ (Montfaucon, *Antiquité expliquée et représentée en figures*, 1719, vol. 5), and Pietro Santi Bartoli,¹⁷ whose drawings from antiquity of all sorts, with explanations by Bellori,¹⁸ brought forth the era in his own time.

The second half of the eighteenth century is a phenomenon which in many respects is analogous with ‘the great renaissance’. There was also dissatisfaction with the art of the present, which was expressed by no one so mercilessly as the French critic Diderot¹⁹; there was that same intoxication with and passionate regard for the art of antiquity, which was proclaimed by no one so categorically as the German scholar *Winckelmann*²⁰, who declared directly that the only means of us becoming great, and even inimitable, was through the ‘imitation of the ancients’; and finally, by no one was this fulfilled to such a degree, with such resolution and success than by the French painter Jacques-Louis David. In this instance

¹⁵ Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574), author of *Le vite de' più eccellenti architetti, pittori, et scultori italiani da Cimabue insino a' tempi nostri*.

¹⁶ Bernard de Montfaucon (1655-1741), French scholar and critic, renowned for his pioneering work in the field of Greek paleontology.

¹⁷ Pietro (Pier) Santi Bartoli (1615-1700), Italian artist, draughtsman and engraver, author of *Memorie di varie antichità* and *Admiranda Romanorum Antiquitatum*. Bartoli was a pupil of Nicholas Poussin, and also served Christina, Queen of Sweden, as an antiquarian. He was one of the most prolific engravers of Roman antiquities of his time.

¹⁸ Giovan Pietro Bellori (1613-1696), Italian scholar, antiquarian and collector who served Pope Alessandro VII and Christina, Queen of Sweden.

¹⁹ Denis Diderot (1713-1784), French scholar and editor of the *Encyclopédie*.

²⁰ Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768), German art historian and author of *Thoughts on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture* (1755; *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildhauerkunst*), and *The History of Ancient Art* (1764; *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums*). Both Winckelmann's texts were enormously influential throughout Europe in their introduction of a new concept of art history, and were particularly instrumental in the emergence of the neoclassical tradition. His focus on Greek art in particular resulted in the spread of neoclassicism throughout the arts. He became the first librarian and keeper of Antiquities of the Vatican. Winckelmann's writings were an essential source for theorists of the Academy of Arts. For instance, Petr Chekalevskii, the conference secretary of the Academy, in his treatise *Rassuzhdenie o svobodnykh khudozhestvakh* (Discourse on the Free Arts, St. Petersburg, 1792) refers to and quotes Winckelmann's descriptions of Apollo Belvedere and Laocoon (pp.51-6, 63, 75-79). For more information on Winckelmann's influence in Russia, see: Konstantin Lappo-Danilevskij,

we must restrict ourselves to the theoretical aspect alone, to examine the results to which this renaissance in the field of our science led.

As is well known, a new era in the history of art begins with Winckelmann's scholarly essays on the history of the art of antiquity: the name of the father of this science remains Winckelmann. A happy coincidence of three qualities gave Winckelmann the opportunity to bring about such a revolution. 'God and nature', said Winckelmann, wanted to make an artist, a great artist, out of me, and it was for the worse that I was forced to make myself the priest of both. Out of me there came neither a priest nor an artist, but all my heart is devoted to the study of painting and of antiquity.' Herein is the first and the main advantage possessed by Winckelmann: an artist himself, albeit with hands tied, he searched in the study of the history of art only for consolation for the fact that he himself could not become its subject. This vital presence of art within him placed him higher than his professional colleagues. He loved ancient art not because it was ancient, but because antiquity was beautiful. This is why, when he went to Italy, he also regarded artistic monuments themselves not as a subject of a lifeless, antiquarian punctiliousness, but as the petrified cascade of a living source of beauty, of a former spring in the art of the classical world. This is why, when for all their erudition his Italian comrades were no more than limited scribblers who wrote thick folio editions on 'a false inkwell from Terlizzo' (Marocelli),²¹ and who regarded artistic monuments only as a longed-for opportunity to display their learning, *Winckelmann* tried to put forward these monuments as models to be imitated by contemporary art. Hating the dry, bureaucratic registration and classification of works of art according to various petty external features - to pistils and petals as we would say in the language of botanists - he was of the opinion that this description must be raised to such a height that it could compete with direct impressions from the works of art themselves. Thus, he had barely arrived in Rome when he began the two dithyrambic descriptions of the Belvedere statue²² which then became part of his essay.

'Die Anfänge der Winckelmann-Rezeption in Rußland', *Zeitschrift für slavische Philologie*, 1999, Band 58, Heft 2, 293-311.

²¹ The individual referred to is unknown.

²² Greek sculpture fragment of a male nude of the first century BCE, signed by Apollonius, and copied from an unknown second-century BCE statue.

Thus formed by both artistic talent and boundless love for art, in the true sense of the word, as the revelation of beauty, he was the first truly and clearly to define the subject of the history of art, and consequently, the method at its heart.

The second particularity which gave him an advantage over his contemporaries was a quality which is the inalienable prerogative of all genius scholars: philosophical understanding, i.e. the striving for and capacity to discover general rules. It was thanks only to the philosophical inclination of his intellect that the isolated and fragmented materials came together in his creative mind at the first attempt as *the history of Greek art*. Despite the comparative paucity of material, Winckelmann in this first attempt at synthesis defined with remarkable accuracy the main periods of Greek art.

Lastly, Winckelmann's third, more external advantage consisted in his remarkable knowledge of the Greek language, antiquity, and literature, which made it possible for him to understand the content of many monuments more accurately and profoundly: thus he brought together the era, both in criticism and in the interpretation of monuments, in his remarkable work entitled 'Unpublished Works of Art' (Monumenti inediti).

The history of art in the true sense of the word begins with Winckelmann. In the end, the nineteenth century did more for it than any other era. The sphere of Greek art is studied more deeply and broadly, thanks to new excavations. Several important researchers are following Winckelmann's footsteps in Germany, such as Welcker,²³ Jahn,²⁴ Panofka,²⁵ Gerhard,²⁶ Brunn,²⁷ Fiederichs²⁸, not counting the latest talents; France and England have also performed a service that is hardly less significant in saving a number of monuments of ancient art, and in their discovery and transportation to educated Europe. In this respect the activities of Lord Elgin²⁹ are particularly important, as are those of the group of

²³ Welcker, Friedrich Gottlieb (1784-1868). German archaeologist and philologist.

²⁴ Jahn, Otto (1813-69). German archaeologist, philologist, and art historian.

²⁵ Panofka, Theodor S. (1800-58). German archaeologist.

²⁶ Gerhard, Friedrich William Eduard (1795-1867). German archaeologist. Lived in Rome for fifteen years from 1822. Author of many important works on the classical world.

²⁷ Brunn, Heinrich von (known as Enrico Brunn, 1822-94). German archaeologist.

²⁸ Perhaps not 'Fiederichs', but Karl Friedrichs (1831-71). German archaeologist.

²⁹ Elgin, Thomas Bruce, 7th Earl of (Lord Elgin, 1766-1841). British diplomat. While serving in Constantinople (1799-1803) he arranged for the Parthenon frieze and other statues (the so-called 'Elgin Marbles') to be transported to England.

archaeologists who travelled in Greece around 1812 (Cockerell³⁰, Forster³¹, Haller³², Stackelberg,³³ and others), the French expedition in Morea³⁴, and, finally, the remarkable enterprise of C.T. Newton.³⁵

The study of *Italian* art and of the Renaissance as a whole and the eras preceding it have been similarly advanced by the labours of d'Agincourt³⁶, Passavant³⁷, Förster³⁸, Viollet-le-Duc³⁹, Crowe⁴⁰, Cavalcaselle⁴¹ and others.

But the greatest success consists in the unusual expansion of the territory of our science, which has embraced the art of the whole world thanks to travels, expeditions, and excavations at all longitudes and latitudes: Napoleon I's expedition in Egypt gave our science access to the land of the pyramids; the noble efforts of such French and English scholars as Flandin⁴² and Coste⁴³, Plass⁴⁴ and Layard⁴⁵, acquainted us with the art of the kingdoms of Anterior Asia⁴⁶; India, China, Central America and the distant islands of the Pacific Ocean have all entered the domain of our science, thanks to the self-sacrifice of a large number of scholar-travellers, and now the history of art, from being local and particular, has become the general and universal history of art. The vast amount of material which is scattered through the tens of thousands of volumes is little-by-little being

³⁰ Cockerell, Charles Robert (1788-1863). British architect and archaeologist. The trip mentioned by Prakhov began in 1810.

³¹ Prakhov writes 'Forster', but he is referring to John Foster II (1787-1846), British architect and archaeologist, who took part in the trip to Greece in 1810

³² Haller, Carl Freiherr von Hallestein (1774-1817). German archaeologist and architect.

³³ Stackelberg, Baron Otto Magnus von (1787-1837). German archaeologist noted for excavation of Etruscan sites.

³⁴ In the Middle Ages the Peloponnese Peninsula in Greece was known as Morea.

³⁵ Newton, Sir Charles Thomas (1816-94). British archaeologist.

³⁶ d'Agincourt, Seroux (born 1730). A six-volume edition of his work was published in 1811.

³⁷ Passavant, Johann David (1787-1861). German art historian.

³⁸ Perhaps Ernst Förster (1800-85). German art historian.

³⁹ Viollet-le-Duc, Eugène Emmanuel (1814-79). French architect and theorist.

⁴⁰ Crowe, Sir Joseph Archer (1825-96). English art historian. Co-author with G.B. Cavalcaselle of one of the first modern art histories written in English, the three-volume *A New History of Painting in Italy from the Second to the Sixteenth Century* (London: J. Murray, 1864).

⁴¹ Cavalcaselle, Giovanni Battista (1819-97). Italian art historian. Associated with Crowe (see previous note).

⁴² Flandin, Eugène (1809-89). French painter, orientalist, archaeologist, and writer on art. Collaborated with Coste (see next note) on studies of Persian art and architecture.

⁴³ Coste, Pascal-Xavier (1787-1879) French architect and historian of architecture.

⁴⁴ The individual referred to is unknown.

⁴⁵ Layard, Sir Austen Henry (1817-94). British archaeologist, especially noted for his studies of Assyrian culture. Excavator of Nineveh.

⁴⁶ 'Anterior Asia' ('Peredniaia Aziia') is a term used by Russian geographers to refer to southwestern Asia from the Bosphorus, Mediterranean Sea and Red Sea to the Iranian Plateau.

marshalled , considered. and made accessible to educated people. In this matter the greatest service has been done to our science by such German scholars as Kugler⁴⁷ and Schnaase⁴⁸.

But that will suffice. We will yet have time and opportunity to examine the process of this gigantic work, since we ourselves will have to tread this entire path, not evenly, of course, but paying particular attention to those eras which are of greater interest to us as artists: i.e. on classical art, on the art of the ‘Renaissance’, and finally on our new art from the end of the eighteenth century onwards.

In conclusion it remains for me only to wish that the love of art and of its scholarly investigation which has guided so many people who have sacrificed all for their sacred goal, will not abandon us in the course of our discussion. Then, success cannot be doubted.

⁴⁷ Kugler, Franz (1800-58). German art historian, born in Danzig (now Gdansk in Poland).

⁴⁸ Schnaase, Karl (1798-1875). German art historian.