SUBSTANTIALITY, CANON, AND ACCIDENT IN THE MINIATURE TRADITION OF DECORATIVE AND APPLIED ARTS

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Abstract*. Conducted analysis of decorative and applied art works from various eras and materials confirms the stability of the substantive core of the artistic language of Eastern miniature painting. Regardless of the technique, form, and functional purpose of the object, the canonical compositional system, linear and rhythmic organization, and conventionality of the image retain their structural integrity. Accidental variations manifest themselves at the level of individual mastery, material and technological features without affecting the essential foundation of the style. Thus, the miniature tradition acts as a universal and successive system of artistic thinking, integrated into various forms of decorative and applied art.*

Keywords*: miniature, canons of miniature painting, substantive core, random variability in miniature painting, decorative and applied art (5-6 words).*

Introduction

This article examines the substantive parameters of miniature painting on medieval decorative and applied art objects. The study analyzes the stylistic boundaries of the traditional canon and its accidental deviations from traditional canons. The goal of the study is to identify the stability of the substantive stylistic core of artistic thinking in the creation of traditional miniature painting, regardless of the form, material, or functionality of the piece. Ceramics, stone objects, carpets, and metal objects, widely used in everyday life and traditional festive rituals, are examined as objects of study for these indicators of miniature painting. These objects possessed special significance and were widely distributed.

To identify the stability of the substantial (unchanging) stylistic core of artistic thinking in the creation of decorative miniature paintings, it is appropriate to examine authentic works themselves, which differ in material, technique, form, purpose, and era, but are united by common principles of the pictorial language of decorative painting.

The artistic painting of the ceramic bowl in the Eastern miniature style, dated the end of Seljuk period in 12th c. and created in Kashan, one of the leading centers of Seljuk ceramic production, and now housed in the Freer Gallery (Washington, USA), embodies the key principles of medieval Muslim miniature painting. The composition is illustrative and based on a scene from Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*. Scenes of court life are arranged in horizontal bands (friezes), ensuring a consistent "reading" of the plot. The tradition of developing a plot through "plans" (foreground, middle ground, background) is characteristic of miniature paintings adorning medieval classical literature. In this case, we observe a correspondence between the compositional and spatial arrangements of the characters, enabling us to understand the image content. The hierarchy of characters on the bowl echoes the real hierarchy of court etiquette. From this, the inevitable

conclusion follows that the miniature painting on the bowl complies with the substantiality requirements of the medieval canon of miniature painting.

Decorative painting in the style of Eastern Muslim miniatures is also present on a porcelain dish from the late 12th - early 13th centuries, also created in Iran and also from the Freer Gallery collection. The painting's composition is characterized by harmony due to the uniform ornamentation of the clothing and the uniform, warm background against which the characters are positioned. The main figures in the composition are positioned opposite each other, forming two volumetric masses united by a single linear design. The figures, painted with mineral enamels (minayi), demonstrate precise detailing of clothing and a rich color scheme. The painting of the dish and the content of its depiction are characterized by a representative quality, in which the artistic expressiveness of the figures and the decorative structure are intended to emphasize the refined taste and aristocratic status of the characters depicted.

In this case, the style of miniature painting testifies to the artist's free application of the canons of medieval depiction. Large-scale depictions of the figures predetermined a more detailed elaboration of the facial features of the depicted characters, which cannot be considered a strict adherence to the canons of miniature Muslim painting.

The substantive basis of the miniature is present in both works, but it adheres to the canon to varying degrees. The conventional organization of space, the stylized depiction of figures, and the decorative construction of the composition correspond to the "matrix" of the artistic language enshrined in the canon. The artistic canon of Seljuk art determines the proportions and hierarchy of figures, the arrangement of scenes, and the stability of the compositional core. This style is characterized by rounded Oghuz faces, narrowed eyes, and the absence of landscape or architectural backgrounds. Male figures are usually depicted in traditional Turkic open robes, with moustaches and a small beard. Stylistic accidental nature (freedom) manifests itself in individual variations of form, the compositional organization of the characters, and the excessive detailing of the faces and ornamental motifs of the characters' clothing. A painted porcelain bowl and a decorative dish demonstrate different accidental (free, casual) solutions, but these individual and subjective variations do not affect the substantial (basic) foundation of the artistic style.

Moving on to stone objects, it is worth noting a 13th-14th century samovar made of steatite (soapstone), housed in the Azerbaijan National Museum of Art. The samovar's decor combines ornamental motifs and images of Persian gazelles, arranged within horizontal bands dividing the body into segments. This composition lends dynamism to the piece and emphasizes the narrative principle of organizing the perception of the composition, characteristic of the miniature tradition of the Muslim East. The samovar belongs to the ornamental and decorative genre with elements of zoomorphic images.

The next works of importance for our study are two carpets on the theme of *Rustam and Zohrab* (1911 and 1912), one of which is housed in the Azerbaijan National Museum of Art, the other in the collection of the National Carpet Museum. The artistic design of the carpets is distinguished by their individual composition and harmonious distribution of elements. The stylistic solution of the composition is a symmetrical arrangement, ensuring extremely easy legibility and expressiveness of the characters depicted. The image of Rustam and Zohrab, seated in armchairs under a tree, is harmonized with the surrounding space thanks to the inclusion of symbolic animals and birds in the upper and lower portions, as well as calligraphic elements, enriching the central field both in content and visual information. A restrained color scheme enhances the expressiveness of the characters and their individuality. The images on the carpets

are characterized by an epic and representational nature, where the content is combined with a symmetrical decorative structure.

The substantiality and incidental nature of the miniature style are also evident in metal work, further emphasizing the universality of Eastern Muslim miniature art, regardless of the medium on which it is created. Of particular interest in this regard is the gold belt of Shah Ismail Khatai (1507), housed in the Imperial Treasury of the Topkapi Palace in Istanbul. This artifact, crafted using metal working and inlay, demonstrates a decorative and symbolic variant (accident) of the miniature tradition. The belt depicts the shah holding a hunting falcon and an attendant, along with grapevine and plant motifs arranged in a frieze composition.

The nature of the shah's depiction, his clothing, and the miniature-stylized silhouette of the figure and attendant, all recall similar images in medieval manuscript illustrations. Here, we again observe the frank substantiality of the miniature style, including in metal work. The absence of color in the image did not prevent the preservation of the substantial core of the style, enshrined in the canon.

The substantial basis of the style is manifested through the linear rhythmic organization, the conventional treatment of figures, and the stable system of figurative construction characteristic of the artistic language of classical miniature painting in the Muslim East. The Safavid canon is expressed in the conventional proportions and scale of figures, the hierarchy of characters, and the linear rhythmic organization of planes replacing perspective planes. The canon also manifests itself in recurring decorative motifs and the conventions of depicting characters and real objects, which ultimately ensures the stylistic integrity and recognizability of the substantial matrix of medieval miniature painting.

The incidental nature of the style manifests itself in individual variations in composition, the shape of individual details, and decorative finishing, depending on the artist's approach, materials, and technological features.

Thus, Shah Ismail's belt is another striking example of how the universal principles of miniature painting are evident in all forms of decorative and applied art: ceramics, stone, carpets, and metal work, confirming the continuity of artistic thinking and the stability of the substantial core of traditional miniature painting.

The substantiality and incidental nature of style are also evident in such a work of decorative and applied art as the decorative horse blanket that adorned the horse of an important dignitary of the past. The blanket was made in Tabriz in the late 19th century and is now an exhibit at the Azerbaijan National Museum of Art.

The use of various objects of decorative and applied art, executed in the traditions of miniature painting, allows us to affirm the universality of the artistic system of constructing an image on an object. The blanket is made using the *tekelduz* embroidery technique on dense woolen cloth, which is distinguished by its high wear resistance and thermal insulation properties. The embroidery composition is characterized by the complexity and artistic organization of motifs, united into separate ornamental bands. These bands feature animal figures, stylized plant motifs, and symbolic depictions of solar signs. The color scheme of the blanket embroidery is rich and vibrant, harmoniously set off by the dark background of the base fabric. The blanket belongs to the ornamental and decorative genre with symbolic elements.

Despite the differences in materials, technologies, and compositional solutions, all works retain the substantive foundation of the artistic language of traditional Eastern miniature art, manifested in the linear rhythmic organization, conventional interpretation of forms, and repetition

of decorative motifs. The canon of style predetermines the proportions of figures, scale, repetition of forms, and structural balance of the composition, while accidental elements manifest themselves in individual variations in execution, ornamental details, color schemes, and the material of the piece.

Conclusion

The analysis of various objects and works of art confirms the universality and continuity of the artistic language of miniatures, which manifests itself not only in the pictorial (color) structure of miniatures but also in various forms of decorative and applied art, sometimes lacking a color scheme. Thus, the style of medieval miniature painting emerges as a stable system of figurative and decorative thinking, capable of integrating into a variety of artistic techniques and materials while maintaining its substantiality and depth of artistic language.

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