Ukrainian Painting

The development of visual arts in Ukraine dates back to ancient times. Archaeological findings, particularly from the Trypillian and Scythian cultures, stand out for their skilled craftsmanship and demonstrate the high artistic level of the creations by the inhabitants of modern-day Ukraine.

Examples of the art of Kyivan Rus' have survived, which evolved within the general framework of medieval European culture and was closely tied to the church and Christian faith. The leading genres of visual art in the Kyivan Rus' state included mosaics, frescoes, iconography, and book miniatures.

A harmonious world of ancient Rus' art, uniting architecture, painting, and applied arts, is preserved in Kyiv's Saint Sophia Cathedral, which holds the only examples in Europe of secular monumental painting from the 11th century. The preserved mosaics, adorning the central dome and the main altar, are the cathedral's highlights.

A masterpiece of mosaic art is the depiction of Oranta (or the Virgin Mary as the Unbreakable Wall) in the central apse. This mosaic, six meters high, is unique because it is created on the inner surface of the apse. From different viewpoints, Oranta appears to assume different poses—standing, bowing in prayer, or kneeling.

Until the 17th century, icons remained the primary artistic works in Ukraine. Transitioning between iconography and secular portrait painting were the so-called "parsuny"—portraits executed using icon-painting techniques. Wealthy Cossack elite families often commissioned their portraits.

In the 17th–18th centuries, the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra art school and the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy played important roles in developing national art. In Kharkiv, the "additional classes" at the Kharkiv Collegium essentially operated as a genuine art academy.

The golden age of secular portrait painting came in the second half of the 18th century. During this time, many talented Ukrainian youths studied and worked at the Saint Petersburg Academy of Arts. Prominent Russian artists of the era, such as Dmytro Levytsky from Kyiv and Volodymyr Borovykovsky from Myrhorod, were of Ukrainian origin. Anton Losenko from Hlukhiv, a founder of the historical genre in Russian academic art, and renowned sculptor Ivan Martos from Ichni in Chernihiv province, also had Ukrainian roots.

Dmytro Levytsky elevated portrait art in the Russian Empire to the level of Western European masters. The Vorontsov family considered him their family artist and paid well for his portraits. His portraits of noble Smolny Institute graduates are a unique 18th-century series, alongside his lifetime portrait of philosopher Denis Diderot, who posed for Levytsky in Saint Petersburg.

The works of Volodymyr Borovykovsky, a student of Levytsky, gained great acclaim, especially his female portraits (e.g., "Portrait of M. I. Lopukhina," 1797; "V. I. Arsenieva," housed in the Russian Museum in Saint Petersburg). These portraits, filled with elegiac moods, often depicted solitary women in a state of dreamy contemplation against a backdrop of "rural landscapes."

In his grand ceremonial portraits of A. B. Kurakin and Paul I, Borovykovsky combined artistic skill with vivid and convincing characterization. He portrayed Catherine II (1795, Russian Museum, Saint Petersburg) as an ordinary elderly woman in simple attire during a walk in the park.

Although the Saint Petersburg Academy of Arts remained the primary educational center in the Russian Empire during the 19th century, many artists were drawn to Ukraine, referred to as the "new Italy" at the time.

Oleksiy Venetsianov, a student of Borovykovsky and a Ukrainian of Greek descent from Nizhyn, initiated the transition to realism. His studio at the Saint Petersburg Academy of Arts attracted many students, but Karl Bryullov's brilliant artistic style captivated Venetsianov's students even more. Among Bryullov's students

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were the last Ukrainian masters of classical painting - Ivan Soshenko, Taras Shevchenko, Dmytro Bezperchyi, and others.

Taras Shevchenko, a genius of Ukrainian literature, was also a professional artist. His work spanned several artistic fields, including portrait, genre, landscape, and religious painting. As a representative of the late classical period, Shevchenko avoided large academic canvases, excelling in intimate, smaller works. However, he did create larger oil paintings (for example, "*Catherine*"). His portraits, both elegant female and individual male ones, brought him special artistic fame.

In romantic works like *Peasant Family*, *Gypsy Fortune Teller*, and *Self-Portrait*, Shevchenko's departure from strict academicism is evident. His multifaceted talent also shone in graphic art, such as the series *Picturesque Ukraine*. In 1860, Shevchenko was awarded the title of academician of engraving by the Saint Petersburg Academy of Arts. Unfortunately, his exile and a ban on painting hindered the full development of his artistic talent.

Shevchenko's followers included Lev Zhemchuzhnikov (1828–1912), Ivan Sokolov (1823–1918), and Kostyantyn Trutovsky (1826–1893). They received their artistic education at the Saint Petersburg Academy of Arts.

For a long time, Lev Zhemchuzhnikov lived in Ukraine, where he first became acquainted with the works of T. Shevchenko, whom he met personally in 1860. He created many paintings depicting the life of the Ukrainian people. Some of them were inspired by Shevchenko's poetry, particularly *"The Kobzar on the Road."*

Ivan Sokolov also turned to Ukrainian themes. He often spent time in Ukraine; in 1883, he moved to Odesa, and from 1886, he taught in Kharkiv, becoming the vice president of the Kharkiv Society of Fine Arts Enthusiasts. He addressed ritualistic and everyday scenes in his works, such as *"Night on Ivan Kupala," "Village Wedding," "The Kobzar,"* and *"At the Tavern."*

The traditions of realistic art and the works of T. Shevchenko shaped Kostyantyn Trutovsky. Ukrainian by origin, he was born in Kursk, but his childhood was spent at his father's estate in Kharkiv region, which greatly influenced the poetic imagery of his works, as well as his depiction of rural life and rituals. Trutovsky considered the portrayal of the everyday life of Ukrainian peasants in contemporary Slobozhanshchyna as the goal of his artistic creativity. Among his best works are *"Whiten the canvas," "On a Moonlit Night," "Fiancé Refusal," "Wedding Ransom," "Flood,"* and an illustration for Marko Vovchok's work *"Chumak."* In addition to Marko Vovchok's works, he also illustrated Ukrainian writings by Mykola Hohol and Taras Shevchenko. For his painting *"Round Dance in Kursk Province,"* the artist was awarded the title of academician.

In a series of satirical and accusatory paintings, he truthfully depicted the life of provincial landowners: *"Card Game," "Landowners – Politicians," "Brought to the Landowner,"* and *"Dance of Serf Women Before the Landowner."*

Another representative of classicism, Russian artist Vasily Tropinin, said that Ukraine replaced the Academy for him. He lived and worked in Podillia for many years, dedicating numerous portraits to Ukrainian themes: *"The Girl from Podillya," "A Boy with an Axe," "A Wedding in the Village of Kukavka," "A Ukrainian,"* and *"Portrait of a Podillya Peasant."*

The life of the marine artist Ivan Aivazovsky was closely connected with Ukraine, as he spent much of his life in his hometown of Feodosia and bequeathed his art gallery to the city. Ukrainian themes appear in his works such as *"Reeds on the Dnipro near the Town of Aleshki," "Chumaks in Ukraine,"* and a unique genre painting for the artist, *"A Wedding in Ukraine."*

The landscape art of Arkhip Kuindzhi, who was born near Mariupol, was innovative. His very first exhibited painting, *"Moonlit Night on the Dnieper,"* caused a sensation in St. Petersburg. The peak of his

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mastery is evident in his famous landscapes, which reveal the beauty of Ukrainian nature: *"Chumak Route in Mariupol," "Ukrainian Night," "Night Over the Dnipro," "Dnipro in the Morning,"* and *"Steppe in Bloom."*

The main trend in visual art in the second half of the 19th century was the movement toward realism, which was central to the efforts of the members of the Society for Traveling Art Exhibitions (Peredvizhniki). The most famous painted portrait of Taras Shevchenko was created by Ivan Kramskoi, a Ukrainian from Ostrogozhsk in Slobozhanshchyna, who was the initiator and ideological leader of the Peredvizhniki movement. Many notable Peredvizhniki artists were also of Ukrainian origin: Oleksandr Lytovchenko (from Kremenchuk), Mykola Yaroshenko (from Poltava), and Mykola Ge, who lived for many years on an estate near Kharkiv.

The realist artist Ilya Repin was originally from near Chuhuiv. Even after moving to Russia, he missed his homeland and often returned to it. He frequently visited the "Kachanivka" estate, owned by the Tarnovskyi family, Ukrainian patrons of the arts. At their family estate in Kachanivka, Repin created the first studies for his famous painting *"The Zaporozhians Write a Letter to the Turkish Sultan."* Thus, Ukraine held a significant place in both his art and life.

Ukrainian themes appear frequently in Repin's works, including *"The Bandurist," "A Ukrainian Woman," "A Ukrainian Woman by the Fence," "A Ukrainian Cottage," "A Ukrainian Peasant," "Evenings (Gatherings)," "The Fair," "Motria Kochubei," "Portrait of T.H. Shevchenko,"* as well as a portrait of Taras Shevchenko paired with a portrait of Nikolai Nekrasov in the painting *"They Did Not Expect Him."* Other works include *"The Hetman," "The Haidamaka," "Portrait of S.M. Dragomirova," "The Zaporozhian," "The Cossack," "A Cossack in the Steppe," "The Zaporozhians Write a Letter to the Turkish Sultan," "The Black Sea Free Cossacks," "The Haidamakas," "The end of the Black Sea* Free Cossacks" and *"The Hopak."*

According to the *Shevchenko Dictionary,* Repin created "around 180 paintings, studies, sketches, drafts, and drawings on Ukrainian themes" - in addition to dozens of sketchbooks and "several hundred" drawings related to *"The Zaporozhians."*

Mykola Pymonenko was an outstanding master of the genre painting. Most of his works, dedicated to peasant life, are characterized by sincerity, emotionality, and high artistic skill. These include *"Christmas Divination," "Carols," "Easter Matins," "Wedding in Kyiv Province," "On a Military Campaign," "The Matchmakers," "Harvest in Ukraine," "For Water," "Haymaking," "Ukrainian Night: Date,"* and others. Pymonenko was the author of about 715 paintings and drawings. He was among the first in Ukrainian art to combine the genre painting with poetic Ukrainian landscapes and founded an art school in Kyiv.

Volodymyr Orlovsky, one of the founders of the new Ukrainian realist landscape, was known as the "Seeker of the Sun." The finest Ukrainian portrait artist of the late 19th and early 20th centuries is considered to be Oleksandr Murashko, a student of Ilya Repin and the creator of acclaimed works such as *"The Carousel," "Girl in a Red Hat," "The Old Teacher," "Parisiennes at the Café,"* and *"The Funeral of the Koshevoy (a Cossack Chieftain)"*

The combination of art with the awareness of a national idea first appears in the works of Serhii Vasylkivsky. He devoted his entire artistic mastery to Ukraine, creating landscapes of the Dnipro region, Podillia, and Slobozhanshchyna, as well as architectural monuments, genre paintings, and historical canvases. Notable works include *"Cossack in the Steppe," "Cossack Glade," "Zaporizhian Cossack,"* and a portrait of Taras Shevchenko. Simultaneously, he studied and collected artifacts of ancient Ukrainian art.

In 1900, Vasylkivsky, together with the battle painter Mykola Samokysh, created the album *"From Ukrainian Antiquity."* Historian Dmytro Yavornytsky, the founder of the museum in Katerynoslav, provided commentary on Vasylkivsky's watercolors.

Links to videos on this text:

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1. Match the picture with its name and artist:

Pymonenko M.K. "Wedding in Kyiv province"

Pymonenko M.K. "Carols"(Колядки)

Trutovsky K.O. "Fiancé Refusal"

Repin I.Y. "Evenings. Kachanivka." (Вечорниці)

Trutovsky K.O. "Whiten the canvas"

Pymonenko M.K. "Matchmakers" (Свати)

Sokolov I.I. "Night on Ivan Kupala" (Ніч на Івана Купала)

Shevchenko T.G. "Peasant Family"

Pymonenko M.K. "Christmas Divination" (Різдвяні ворожіння)

Pymonenko M.K. "Easter Matins" (Великодня утреня - Morning of Christ's Resurrection)

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Vasylkovsky S.I. "Zaporozh Cossack"

Pymonenko M.K. "Harvest in Ukraine" (Жнива)

Repin I.Y. "Zaporozhians write a letter to the Turkish Sultan"

Pymonenko M.K. "For water"

Pymonenko M.K. "On a military campaign"

Pymonenko M.K. "Haymaking" (Сінокіс)

Pymonenko M.K. "Ukrainian night. Date"

Vasko H. A. "Portrait of Petro Sahaidachny" (Портрет Петра Сагайдачного)

Murashko O. O. "Funeral of the koshevoy" (Похорон кошового)

Vasylkovsky S.I. “Cossack in the steppes. Warning signs”

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Aivazovsky I.K. "Chumaks in Ukraine" (Чумаки на Україні)

Trutovsky K.O. "Chumak" (Чумак)

Kuindzhi A.I. "Evening in Ukraine"

Shevchenko T.G. "Catherine" (Катерина)

Kramskoy I.M. "Portrait of Taras Shevchenko"

Tropinin V.A. "The Girl from Podillya"

Shevchenko T.G. "Self-portrait"

Trutovsky K.O."Taras Shevchenko with kobza over the Dnieper"

Kuindzhi A.I. "Moonlit night on the Dnieper"

Trutovsky K.O. "Blind Kobzar" (Сліпий кобзар)

Aivazovsky I.K. "Moonlit Night in the Crimea"

Orlovsky V.D. "Summer day in Ukraine"

Aivazovsky I.K. “Reeds on the Dnieper near the town of Aleshki”

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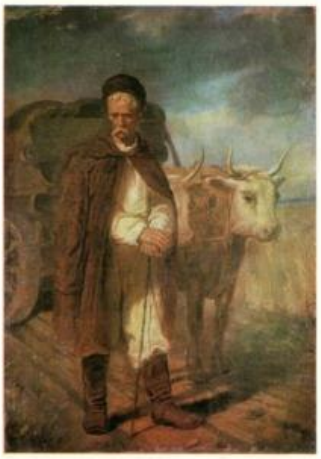

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2. Choose the correct answer to the question. Circle the correct letter.

1. In which Ukrainian cathedral can we see the mosaic image of Our Lady of Oranta (or the Virgin Mary as the Unbreakable Wall)?

a) In St. Sophia Cathedral
b) In Kiev Pechersk Lavra
c) In St. Andrew's Church
d) In Vladimir Cathedral

2. Who painted these portraits?

Denis Didro; Alimova, graduate of the Smolny Institute; Kateryna Vorontsova-Dashkova; Catherine II

a) Vladimir Borovikovsky
b) Dmitry Levitsky
c) Karl Bryullov
d) Oleksiy Venetsianov

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3. Who painted these portraits?

Maria Lopukhina; Paul I; Catherine II on a walk in Tsarskoye Selo Park; Oleksandr Kurakin; Paul I

a) Vladimir Borovikovsky
b) Dmitry Levitsky
c) Karl Bryullov
d) Oleksiy Venetsianov

4. Which Ukrainian sculptor is the author of the monument to Minin and Pozharsky on Red Square in Moscow?

a) Dmitry Levitsky
b) Anton Losenko
c) Karl Bryullov
d) Ivan Martos

5. Who painted the picture "Kobzar on the way"?

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a) Ivan Soshenko,
b) Taras Shevchenko,
c) Dmytro Bezperchy
d) Lev Zhemchuzhnikov

6. Which artist was a student of Ilya Repin and painted the famous painting "Carousel"?

a) Oleksandr Lytovchenko
b) Mykola Pymonenko
c) Olexander Murashko
d) Mykola Yaroshenko

7. Who painted the picture "Gypsy fortune teller"?

a) Lev Zhemchuzhnikov
b) Taras Shevchenko
c) Dmytro Bezperchy
d) Konstantin Trutovsky

8. Which artists painted the portrait of Taras Shevchenko? Tick four correct answers.

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Vladimir Borovikovsky
Dmitry Levitsky
Karl Bryullov
Oleksiy Venetsianov
Vasily Tropinin
Ivan Aivazovsky
Arkhip Kuindzhi
Ivan Kramskoy
Ilya Repin
Mykola Pymonenko
Vladimir Orlovsky
Sergey Vasilkovsky
Konstantin Trutovsky

9. Who painted these pictures?

"A Ukrainian woman"; "A Ukrainian woman by the fence"; "Sofia Dragomirova in Ukrainian clothes"; " "Motria Kochubei"

"Haidamaks in Uman are preparing weapons" (Гайдамаки); "Hopak" (Гопак)

"The Black Sea Free Cossacks" (Чорноморська вольниця); "The end of the Black Sea Free Cossacks"

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a) Mykola Pymonenko
b) Konstantin Trutovsky
c) Ilya Repin
d) Sergey Vasylkovsky

10. Which Ukrainian artists painted genre paintings, ritualistic and everyday scenes from the life of simple peasants? Tick seven correct answers.

Anton Losenko
Ilya Repin
Ivan Aivazovsky
Mykola Pymonenko
Gavrilo Vasko
Lev Zhemchuzhnikov
Ivan Sokolov
Konstantin Trutovsky
Arkhip Kuindzhi
Sergey Vasylkovsky
Vladimir Orlovsky
Taras Shevchenko
Mykola Samokysh

11. Ivan Aivazovsky painted mostly …

a) portraits
b) still life
c) sea-scapes
d) genre paintings

12. Which Ukrainian artists painted landscapes? Tick three correct answers.

Mykola Ge
Ivan Kramskoy
Ilya Repin
Arkhip Kuindzhi
Mykola Pymonenko
Lev Zhemchuzhnikov
Ivan Sokolov
Konstantin Trutovsky
Vladimir Orlovsky
Serhii Vasylkivsky
Mykola Samokysh
Mykola Yaroshenko
Olexander Murashko

13. Mykola Samokysh was …

a) a landscape painter
b) a sea-scape painter
c) a portrait painter
d) a battle painter

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14. Name one artist who helped transition Ukrainian art from iconography to realism.

a) Vladimir Borovikovsky
b) Dmitry Levitsky
c) Oleksiy Venetsianov
d) Taras Shevchenko

15. What are "parsuny"?

a) Paintings of rural Ukrainian life
b) Icon-like portraits of wealthy individuals
c) Large religious frescoes
d) Engravings of medieval events

16. Who is known as the "Seeker of the Sun" in Ukrainian art?

a) Mykola Pymonenko
b) Volodymyr Orlovsky
c) Arkhip Kuindzhi
d) Vasily Tropinin

17. Which series by Shevchenko showcased Ukrainian culture?

a) Picturesque Ukraine
b) From Ukrainian Antiquity
c) The Zaporozhians
d) Cossacks at the Dnipro

18. The Society for Traveling Art Exhibitions (Peredvizhniki) emphasized which artistic trend?

a) Realism
b) Symbolism
c) Abstract art
d) Classicism

19. Which artist was a pioneer of historical genre painting in Russian academic art?

a) Anton Losenko
b) Mykola Ge
c) Volodymyr Borovykovsky
d) Ivan Martos

20. Mykola Pymonenko is known for combining:

a) Realistic landscapes and genre painting
b) Portraiture and abstract forms
c) Religious art and historical scenes
d) Iconography and urban themes

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