THE THEORETICAL WRITINGS OF ALEXIS GRITCHENKO AND THE ISSUE OF MODERNISM

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PREFACE

Alexis Gritchenko, artist and theorist, (born April 2, 1883 in Krolevets, Chernihiv gubernia, Ukraine, died January 28, 1977 in Vence, France) was active in avant-garde artistic circles in Kiev and Moscow until his emigration to the West in 1918. During a decade spent in Moscow (1908-1918), Gritchenko was an energetic advocate of Cubism and French formalist theory. He wrote numerous articles and several books, in which he strove to define the position of avant-garde Western influences within the context of the indigenous Russian and Ukrainian artistic traditions. Although of secondary interest to the study of the Moscow avant-garde, Gritchenko’s works and writings are significant, in that they foreshadow the ideas of the Ukrainian avant-garde of the 1920’s. Although Gritchenko’s art has been discussed by numerous authors in various articles, to date, little attention has been devoted to his theoretical writings. An analysis of Gritchenko’s theories in relation to both the Russian and the Ukrainian avant-gardes would be of interest and value. This thesis attempts to deal with this problem.
Although Gritchenko's later works are in numerous collections in the West (including the Musée National d'Art Moderne in Paris and the Barnes Foundation in Philadelphia), it is unfortunate that examples of his early period (1906-1919), perhaps the most interesting part of his oeuvre, like his early theoretical writings, are quite rare.

The transliteration system used for Ukrainian and Russian in this paper, is the modified version of the Library of Congress system used by The Encyclopedia of Ukraine, ed. Volodymyr Kubijovyc. Names in the text have been transliterated according to these systems unless Latin equivalents exist, as, in the case of the main protagonist of this work: "Alexis Gritchenko" has been used rather than "Oleksa Hryshchenko," since the former was the French transliteration used by the artist himself after his immigration to France. In passages cited from various texts, the transliteration used by the author or translator has been retained.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Modernist thought and the avant-garde of specific artistic communities have been connected since the beginning of the modern period. Such large urban centres as Paris have supported active artistic and intellectual communities that advocated new, and often radical, alternatives to the status quo. In this context, modernism can be characterized both as the sharp break with traditional canons, and as the search for new themes and new means of technical expression. The avant-garde can be defined as the most militant segment of a modern artistic community. Although the avant-garde's most familiar attributes were their bohemian lifestyle and their anti-social antics, it was their interest in the formal elements of art and their commitment to stylistic innovation that was their most significant contribution.

Modernism has made its appearance in all the major styles of Western European art. A prime example is Neoclassicism, which represented not only the staunch ideologies of the French Revolution, but also introduced technical innovations that expressed the ideas put
forward by the new regime more effectively. Like Neoclassicism, French Romanticism and Realism, also advanced avant-garde ideological changes which, in art, were closely linked with stylistic innovations. Because of these connections, the avant-garde is often used as a synonym for progress in modern Western European art. In the case of Russian art, however, it is necessary to differentiate clearly between modernism and the avant-garde. In the Russian Empire, the adoption of new ideologies was not always linked to stylistic experimentation in the visual arts as it was in the West.

A case in point is the Russian Realist group, the Peredvizhniki ["The Wanderers"]¹ who, like the French Realists, rejected the rarified and elitist themes of academic artists, in favour of portraying the reality of the lives of the lower classes, and thus would seem to comprise an artistic avant-garde. In France, Realism was a movement molded by a number of strong individuals including, among others, Gustave Courbet and Jean-Francois Millet. Both the French Realists and the Peredvizhniki developed during a period when the fate of the lower rural and urban classes was of primary concern among the liberal intelligentsia. Throughout Europe, contemporary progressive thinkers wished to carefully examine the lives of peasants and workers in an objective and realistic manner, without romanticizing or idealizing
their subject. In this regard, the Peredvizhniki were linked not only to the philosophies of the populists, but also to the writings of such authors as Leo Tolstoi and Fyodor Dostoevsky. Unlike the French Realists, however, who focused solely on present-day issues, the Peredvizhniki did not restrict themselves only to portrayals of contemporary life. Under the influence of rising nationalism, the Peredvizhniki also painted narratives from pre-Petrine Russia. Ilya Repin, one of the major figures of the Peredvizhniki movement, for instance, chose historical subject matter for such paintings as *Tsar Ivan IV with the Body of his Son* (1881-85).

Another distinction between the Russian and the French Realist movements is the fact that the former was created by their communal efforts of a large number of artists who stated communal goals, while the Peredvizhniki movement was more of a collective endeavor which was closely tied to contemporary literature. An example of this is Repin's *Lev Tolstoi at the Plow* (1891). This portrayal of the Realist writer in a Realist situation demonstrates the close bond between painting and literature. Courbet, like the Peredvizhniki, painted scenes from the lives of the lower classes in order to reach his stated goal of a "living art". However, the French Realists offered unique and
individual contributions detached from literary invention. Courbet relied on neither the fame of his sitters nor on the emotional appeal of historic subjects. He stubbornly based his work on his own time, both in his paintings, such as The Stonebreakers (1849), and in his writings. In the Realist Manifesto he wrote:

To know in order to create, that was my idea. To be in a position to translate the customs, the ideas, the appearance of my epoch, according to my own estimation; to be not only a painter, but a man as well; in short, to create living art.²

Courbet was also concerned, however, with developing technical innovations in order that his works would be "living art" not only in content, but also in style.³ To this end, he created his own specific, densely pigmented, textural style, which expanded on the traditional limited tonal modulation of colour used by painters in the academic tradition. The Peredvizhniki by contrast, made few significant formal or stylistic innovations, and kept, in most cases, to a traditional academic palette and painted using a loose and sketchy version of the academic style.

To summarize then, if modernism can be defined as a break with academic canons in subject and in style, and by an adoption of new and radical ideologies, then in the Russian Empire, the realist style and use of contemporary intellectual themes of the Peredvizhniki movement marked the beginning of Russian modernism. However, because of
their lack of interest in stylistic innovation, they cannot be considered an avant-garde movement parallel to, for example, the avant-garde community in Paris.

The Russian artistic generations that succeeded the Peredvizhniki and developed further in the realist tradition of their predecessors, also cannot be considered to be "avant-garde" in this strict sense. Neither the Neo-nationalist painters,\(^4\) who sought to revive folk art, nor the Mir iskusstva ["World of Art"] group,\(^5\) who were inspired by their nostalgia for eighteenth century Western Europe, were concerned with serious formal or technical innovations. Only in the first decade of the twentieth century did a new generation of artists become interested, almost exclusively, in the formal elements of art. The styles and achievements of Cubo-Futurism (e.g. Vladimir Burliuk, David Burliuk), Rayism (e.g. Mikhail Larionov, Natalia Goncharova), Suprematism (e.g. Kazimir Malevich) and Constructivism (e.g. Vladimir Tatlin, Alexander Rodchenko), mark the beginning of the true avant-garde within the Russian Empire.

This avant-garde was an explosion of enthusiasm, emotionality, and innovation, frequently fuelled by extravagant ideologies that were often unrealistic and riddled with inconsistencies. In their search for new sources, the artists of the avant-garde did not turn
westward, nor did they turn to the methods of folk artists as previous groups had done. Employing formalist analysis, this avant-garde drew selectively from local traditions. The goal of the avant-garde was not to emulate folk art traditions, as the Neo-nationalist artists had sought to do, but to draw inspiration from "primitive" local sources just as the French Cubist had derived stimulus from African and Oceanic sculptures. Although the members of the Russian avant-garde were interested in the formal elements of all local folk art, the indigenous art form they exploited most frequently was the icon.

In pre-revolutionary times, the icon was a widespread devotional object because of its prominent position in the religious and liturgical tradition of Orthodox Christianity. However, the icon was not regarded as fine art in the way that a painting would be. The novel idea of icon as art -- rather than simply as a devotional object -- only came to the fore in the first decade of the twentieth century, and made its impact on artists such as Natalia Goncharova (1881-1962) who used elements of icon painting to portray peasants and workmen. Vladimir Tatlin's (1885-1953) extensive use of oval and convex forms were also derived from the formal analysis of icons.
Alexis Gritchenko was among the first to focus his theoretical writings on the relationship of the icon tradition with contemporary art, both in Russia and in the West. Gritchenko discussed the importance of the coexistence and cross-fertilization of old and new, indigenous and foreign, in the creation of the art of the avant-garde. Although Gritchenko worked closely with the artists of the Moscow and St. Petersburg avant-gardes, he was, nevertheless, a Ukrainian artist, and his theories not so much reflected the ideas of the Russian avant-garde as they foreshadowed the artistic philosophies of the Ukrainian avant-garde of the 1920’s.

For the Russian avant-garde, the process of creating a new culture involved a purgation of undesirable and unnecessary elements. Russian artists often rejected both Western influences and all remnants of a Russian artistic heritage in their struggle to create a totally new culture. For the Ukrainian artists of the avant-garde, this process was one of the selection and integration of both modern foreign and native cultural trends into a new expression of culture.

The influences of past art on the Russian avant-garde can be demonstrated by Kazimir Malevich’s (1887-1935) Black Square (1913). The relationship between this work, (which consists of a single, simple geometric form) and the traditional icon is not initially apparent.
because of the severely abbreviated manner in which Malevich exploited tradition. The correlation becomes evident only when the installation of this painting is examined. Malevich positioned it in the corner that was the traditional place of the holy image in a village home. Thus, Malevich’s painting replaced the icon and became, in effect, the modern-day icon.

In contrast, Vasyl Yermilov’s (1894-1967) Male Portrait (1923), reflected the Ukrainian tendency to integrate old and new not with the intention to replace or substitute, but to use native artistic traditions in the creation of a new artistic style. In this work, Yermilov used simple geometric elements together with a figurative portrayal of a male head. This stylization reflects the influence of the Byzantine icon. The pitted and scarred surface of the copper plate which was worked to create the image of man, also serves as a textural counterpoint to the tooled surfaces of the abstract elements. This further emphasizes the interplay of old (figurative) and new (non-figurative) in Ukrainian avant-garde art. Yermilov indulged in a visual pun: he used metal to create the male profile, juxtaposing this image against a neutral background. In this way he played on the Byzantine convention of setting the figure against a gilded ground. The differing attitudes towards local artistic heritage as well as towards foreign influences,
serve to highlight the differences between the Russian and the Ukrainian avant-gardes.\textsuperscript{8}

In Ukraine the 1917 Revolution and subsequent upheavals represented both a class/economic struggle, and a battle for national self-determination. For the members of the Ukrainian avant-garde, who were of diverse political orientations, the establishment of, initially, a separate Ukrainian Republic, and later, a Ukrainian Soviet Republic, presented the opportunity to create a new culture without the repressions suffered under Tsarist rule.

In the early 1920's the energies of the avant-garde in Russia were channelled towards the creation of a functional Communist art, while in Ukraine, artists were given relatively free reign to develop a new Ukrainian culture. In order to achieve its goal, the Russian avant-garde continued the pre-revolutionary practice of rejecting the West and past forms, but at an accelerated rate. The new Russian culture being created -- as different in form as it was in content from bourgeois culture -- was to eventually replace all other cultural trends. Central to this conception was the idea that since Russian artists were formulating the only true culture of the proletariat, it was their works that would be exported throughout the world as Communism spread. Even though the art of the avant-garde was suppressed
with the rise of Stalin, nevertheless, the concept of the Russian culture as the sole legitimate culture of the Communist Revolution remained.9

The goal of the major Ukrainian cultural figures of the same period was very different. For them, the rediscovery and reinterpretation of Ukrainian heritage and the combination of this heritage with contemporary Western principles in order to formulate a culture on the level of European culture became a guiding force. Alexis Gritchenko shared this conception, so much so that although he took part in the Moscow avant-garde community, his theories were more closely aligned with those of the Ukrainian avant-garde.

Admittedly, prior to the 1917 Revolution, it would have been quite difficult to distinguish clearly between the Ukrainian and the Russian avant-gardes. The situation was complicated since many Ukrainian artists, such as Gritchenko, Yermilov and Hryhoryi Narbut (1886-1920), lived in Russia and were active in the avant-garde artistic communities in Moscow and St. Petersburg. The distinction between the Ukrainian and the Russian avant-gardes was made clear, however, after 1917 when numerous Ukrainian artists returned from Russia or Western Europe to participate in the life of an independent Ukrainian state.
Thus, after the Revolution, the Ukrainian and the Russian avant-gardes were in unique and distinct positions. Far from having to struggle against the cultural establishment, as was the lot of the avant-gardes of the West, the avant-garde movements in Soviet Russia and Ukraine were given the task of filling the vacuum created by the Revolution and the years of war which preceded and followed it.

Gritchenko was not among those who returned to Ukraine during this time, and it is likely that it was his experiences in post-revolutionary Moscow that caused him to emigrate to the West in 1919. Nevertheless, his close ties with the members of the Ukrainian avant-garde prior to and during his years in St. Petersburg and Moscow explain the parallels in his theories and the artistic philosophy of Ukraine in the 1920's.
Plate II. Kazimir Malevich's section at the 0.10 exhibit, 1915, with the Black Square (1913), hung in the corner of the room like an icon. (Photograph taken from John Milner, Vladimir Tatlin and the Russian Avant-Garde. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983)
Notes, Chapter I

1. The *Peredvizhniki* or "Wanderers" were the members of the Society for Travelling Art Exhibitions (*Tovarishchstvo peredvizhnykh khudozhestvennykh vystavok*). The Society was formed in 1870 around a core of thirteen painters and one sculptor who had withdrawn from the St. Petersburg Academy rejecting the archaic, mythological subjects they were assigned. They chose instead to depict Russian history and the lives of the Russian people. The *Peredvizhniki* group included Ivan Kramskoi (1837-1887), Nikolai Ge (1831-1894), Vasilii Surikov (1848-1916) and Ilya Repin (1844-1930).


3. Ibid.

4. Members of the Neo-nationalist or Slavic Revival movements included such artists as: Viktor Vasnetsov, Mikhail Nesterov, Valentin Serov and the numerous participants of Mariia Tenisheva’s community at Talashkino and Savva Mamontov’s colony at Abramtsevo.

5. This is the group of artists and intellectuals who contributed to the journal *Mir iskusstva* ["The World of Art"] active between 1898-1904. The group included Sergei Diaghilev, Lev Bakst and Alexandre Benois. The artists in this group were rather eclectic in their philosophies, however, they all subscribed, in varying degrees, to the idea of an art which existed for its own sake and was not subservient to religious or political motives. For an in-depth study see Bowlt, *The Silver Age*.

6. This new approach was illustrated by the large exhibition of icons organized by the Moscow Institute of Archaeology at "The Second All-Russian Folk Art Exhibition" held in St. Petersburg in 1913. See John E. Bowlt, trans. and ed., *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde Theory and Criticism 1902-1934* (New York: Viking Press,

7. M. Larionov and N. Goncharova, "Rayonist and Futurist Manifesto" (1913) in Bowlt, *Russian Art of the Avant Garde*, pp. 87, 90. The artists' rejection of the West was forthright and unmitigated:

> We, rayonists and futurists, do not wish to speak about new or old art, and even less about modern Western art... We are against the West, which is vulgarizing our forms and Eastern forms, and which is bringing down the level of everything.


9. In a letter to Lazar Kaganovich of April 26, 1926, Stalin clearly manifested his Russian cultural chauvinism by criticizing the policy of Ukrainization, which
facilitated an extensive cultural revival under the patronage of the Ukrainian Soviet government. Stalin warned Kaganovich that this cultural trend may lead to:

...the alienation of Ukrainian culture from the all-Soviet culture, a struggle against "Moscow", against the Russians, against the Russian culture and its greatest achievement, Leninism....

CHAPTER II

ALEXIS GRITCHENKO’S BIOGRAPHY

At present, there are no major works concerning the art and theories of Alexis Gritchenko. The materials that are available consist of the artist’s writings, both theoretical and autobiographical, a number of essays, newspaper articles, and reviews of his exhibitions. Only one monograph exists, written by Pavlo Kovzhun in 1934, and this is far from comprehensive. One of the major problems with which any researcher on Gritchenko is faced, is the lack of detailed biographical material not written by the artist himself. Since an objective biography is useful for any study, it seems logical that this be the first order of business. Such a detached and concise overview of the artist’s life is, in Gritchenko’s case, further necessitated by the often rambling, anecdotal but nonetheless amusing, style of his autobiographical writings. His subjective and highly opinionated style also extends to his theoretical writings, making it difficult at times to understand his relationship to the schools and artists which he either praises or criticizes. Without access to even a biographical outline of the artist, the researcher’s task is made burdensome by the
inability to pinpoint exact dates of the artist’s activities. A good biography would provide information necessary to determine who Gritchenko influenced, and by whom he himself was influenced, especially since these details are often glossed over in general studies. Such studies often do not consider the tensions and conflicts between the individual artists and groups of artists, schools, or movements.

Alexis Gritchenko’s life and works embody both the energy and charm of his kozak-gentry heritage and the abrasiveness and bravura of the avant-garde circles he frequented. His early career also reflects the incongruous and rather idiosyncratic position of a Ukrainian artist living and working within a Russian context. Many Ukrainians who left their homeland, from the eighteenth century on, in search of an environment conducive to artistic creativity faced this difficult situation. The emigration of Ukrainian artists north to Russia and west to France and Germany was not reversed until after the Russian Revolution, when an avant-garde was finally established within the borders of the Ukrainian Republic. In the early 1920’s, both Kiev and Kharkiv quickly became vibrant artistic centres of the Ukrainian state rather than merely provincial cities in the backwaters of the Russian Empire. Although Gritchenko had since emigrated, in spirit, he was very much a member
of these new Ukrainian avant-garde, cultural-artistic circles.

Gritchenko was in the Chernihiv region of Ukraine,¹ which was heavily populated by the descendants of the Kozaks. His grandfather, using the freedoms granted to the Kozak-gentry by the Tsar in the seventeenth century, became, in his younger days, a chumak -- a travelling salt merchant. The young Alexis was raised on stories of his grandfather’s adventures in Crimea and the southern Ukraine.² Thus, at an early age, Gritchenko began to dream of travelling to exotic countries. His extensive travels in later years, seem to have been inspired as much by a romantic fascination for things oriental as by his desire to search for new subjects and for the saturated colours of tropical regions.

In 1900, Gritchenko entered the seminary in Chernihiv. The initial four years of the seminary program were identical to those of any other European gymnasium and served to prepare students for university. Only the final two years of the seminary’s six year program were completely devoted to theology.³ The standard gymnasium curriculum at the Chernihiv seminary was enriched with lessons in music, dance, art and by various other extracurricular activities. Gritchenko learned to paint icons from one of his teachers, a priest, who was himself an amateur icon painter.⁴ Gritchenko was, undoubtedly,
quite familiar with icons both within a domestic and church context, but this was probably the first time that he was exposed to the artistic side of this liturgical art form. Much of Gritchenko’s later theoretical writings were devoted, in fact, to the discussion of the artistic merits of the icon.

At the seminary, Gritchenko also began his study of French. This was his first step in the process that led to his admiration of the works of the French avant-garde and later to travel to, and finally to settle in France.

In Chernihiv, Gritchenko had the opportunity to meet the Ukrainian writer Mykhailo Kotsiubynsky (1864-1913). Kotsiubynsky, whose household Gritchenko visited every Thursday for tea, greatly influenced the young artist. Gritchenko notes, with pleasure, that he always spoke with the writer in Ukrainian, an unusual practice at the time, since most of the Ukrainian intelligensia spoke Russian. Kotsiubynsky, a key figure in the Ukrainian cultural renaissance of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was an important influence on the young Gritchenko, not only because of his love of Ukrainian culture, but also because of his westward-looking tendencies. Kotsiubynsky was influenced by such French writers as Victor Hugo (1802-1885), Emile Zola (1840-1902) and Guy de Maupassant (1850-1893). In his writings, he combined French intellectual tendencies with Ukrainian
themes, just as Gritchenko was to do in his later work.

In the meantime, throughout the Russian Empire, revolution was in the air. In the spring of 1904, Gritchenko finished his course of study at the seminary. Like his contemporaries, Gritchenko had consumed a steady diet of M. Gorky, L. Tolstoi, and A. Chekhov, and was thoroughly caught up in the militant spirit of the times. The prospect of becoming a priest did not satisfy him. Against the wishes of his mother and brother, he decided not to pursue further studies at the Chernihiv seminary, and worked towards entering university. After successfully taking his qualifying exams at the gymnasium in Poltava, Gritchenko entered the University in St. Petersburg in 1905.

As the political atmosphere in the capital rapidly built towards political upheaval, Gritchenko’s hopes of pursuing the study of classical literature and philosophy quickly evaporated. After the convulsions of the 1905 Revolution and the subsequent closing of all institutions of higher learning in St. Petersburg, Gritchenko decided to apply to the University of Kiev.

Since he had been frustrated by his experiences in the study of humanities while in St. Petersburg, Gritchenko concentrated on the natural sciences in Kiev. For Gritchenko, there was no contradiction in pursuing scientific studies at the University while simultaneously
taking art courses at the Kiev School of Art.\textsuperscript{11}
Gritchenko’s studies in biology are important, since they laid the foundations for his theoretical exploration of the visual arts. In his writings on art, Gritchenko encouraged artists to expand their interest in foreign art and thus conceived of an extended metaphor which compared biological with artistic inbreeding. He advocated the need for foreign influences that would serve to revitalize stagnating local artistic traditions.

In Kiev, as in later years, Gritchenko befriended a diverse group of artists. His circle included Alexander Archipenko (1887-1964), Oleksander Bohomazov (1880-1930), Sonia Levytska (1874-1937), Vasyl Yermilov (1894-1967) and Volodymyr Denisov (1887-1970).\textsuperscript{12} Averse to exclusive membership in any one group, Gritchenko preferred to associate with a variety of artists of varied ages and diverse stylistic orientations.

In the summer of 1907 Gritchenko traveled to Crimea with Denisov and Bohomazov.\textsuperscript{13} His earlier trips of 1904 and 1906 had aroused a fascination with the sea. Thereafter, the sea became a constant theme in his work, and motivated his subsequent trips to Crimea, the Caucasus, and Constantinople. An ardent colourist, Gritchenko, like other members of the avant-garde, looked to the East for both exotic themes and sumptuous colours.
Crimea had other advantages, besides its exotic towns, beautiful coast and congenial climate. Many important figures of the art world spent their summers there. During their trips to Crimea, Gritchenko and his friends were able to meet such prominent artists as Vasilii Surikov (1848-1912) and Apollinarii Vasnetsov (1845-1926).

In April of 1908, Gritchenko left Kiev and moved to Moscow. He enrolled at the University of Moscow in the biology program. As he had done in Kiev, so too in Moscow Gritchenko developed his artistic talents concurrent with his university studies by attending classes at the studio of K. Yuon and Ivan Dudin.

In Moscow, Gritchenko’s artistic friendships were as varied as they were in Kiev; ranging from contacts with collectors Sergei Shchukin, Ivan Morosov and Ilya Ostroukhov and including many members of the Moscow avant-garde particularly Aristarkh Lentulov, Pavel Kuznetsov, Mikhail Larionov, Ilya Mashkov, Aleksandr Shevchenko and Vladimir Tatlin. Scholar John E. Bowlt considers Gritchenko to be a secondary member of the "Knave of Diamonds" [Bubnovyi valet]. This group consisted, for the most part, of the Neoprimitivist and Cubo-Futurist artists who were the core of the Moscow avant-garde. But although he was close to various members of the "Knave of Diamonds" artistic circle, it seems that
Gritchenko never became an official member despite the urgings of Mashkov who was one of the key figures of the group.\textsuperscript{24} Gritchenko did, nevertheless, make use of his friendships to exhibit in the 1910 and 1912 "Knave of Diamonds" shows.\textsuperscript{25}

During the 1912 show, however, tensions developed between Gritchenko and the leading members of the "Knave of Diamonds". Gritchenko escalated the antagonism further when he gave a lecture to the Union of Youth [\textit{Soiuz Molodezhi}] and sharply criticized its members for their shallow understanding of colour, and their overly "theatrical" use of form. He also chastised his friends Larionov and Goncharova for their attempts, during their Neoprimitivist phase, to present imitations of folk prints [\textit{lubki}] as modern art.\textsuperscript{26} An abridged version of this lecture appeared in \textit{Apollon} through the efforts of the Symbolist poet Sergii Makovsky who was the editor of the journal.\textsuperscript{27}

In this, as in his later works, Gritchenko vacillated between the subjectivity of the artist and the objectivity of the scholar. And although his writings are often rather florid in style and sharply opinionated in content, Gritchenko never slips into the bombastic avant-garde style typical of the period's numerous artistic manifestos and declarations.
Having completed his degree in Biology at the Moscow Imperial University in April of 1913, Gritchenko was finally free to pursue his writings on art theory. For two years, parallel to his scientific studies, Gritchenko had been preparing a manuscript on the relationship of Russian art to Western European art. Then, in May of 1913 he published his treatise entitled *On the Ties of Russian Painting with Byzantium and the West, XIII-XXth centuries: Thoughts of an Artist* ([O sviazakh russkoj zhivopisi s Vizantiej i Zapadom, XIII-XX vv.: mysli zhivopisca] (hereafter cited as *On the Ties of Russian Painting*). This work was an expanded version of a series of informal lectures that Gritchenko had given at Shchukin's Moscow home in 1912. The published essay came out in an edition of 1500 copies, and was printed at the author's cost at the publishing house of A. Levinson. Confident that the collector Sergei Shchukin would purchase at least half the edition (since it contained many references to his collection) Gritchenko dedicated his book to the collector. He was sorely disappointed when Shchukin bought only fifteen copies of the book.28

As indicated by the title of his work, Gritchenko traced the development of Russian painting from the thirteenth century icon through the ages, ultimately tying these developments in Russian painting with those of modern art in twentieth century France. His purpose was
twofold: to emphasize the value of outside influences on the development of Russian art; and to give legitimacy to contemporary French art within the context of Russian art history, emphasizing the importance of modern French art in the future development of Russian painting.

Gritchenko was familiar with modern French art and artistic theory since the works and ideas of such artists as Cézanne, Picasso, Braque and the Cubists were central issues in the artistic polemics of the Russian avant-garde. The collections of Ivan Morozov and Sergei Shchukin presented some of the finest examples of the French avant-garde movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. These collections, easily accessible to Moscow artists, served as textbooks of modern art. The works and ideas they represented were extensively viewed and debated by the members of the Moscow, as well as the St. Petersburg, avant-gardes. Gritchenko frequently visited both the Shchukin and the Ivan Morozov collections. Russian language magazines such as Union of Youth [Soiuz molodezhi], served to disseminate modernist theory since they printed translations of Western European articles, manifestos, declarations and so on. Gritchenko’s knowledge of the French language allowed him direct access to French journals which dealt with contemporary art issues as well. Such artists as Alexandra Exter, who shuttled between the
major art centres in Western and Eastern Europe, also
provided valuable links for the avant-garde.

These numerous resources were, however, no
substitute for first hand experience. During the summer
of 1913, therefore, Gritchenko made a trip to Italy
through Kiev, Lviv and Budapest. He travelled extensively
in Italy visiting some twenty-eight towns and cities,
viewing and studying the major art treasures as well as
learning the language. After numerous adventures,
Gritchenko returned to Moscow by way of Munich with
trainfare borrowed against the collateral of his
passport.31

Back in Moscow, Gritchenko continued his double life
of science and art, and became an assistant to Professor
Galienkin who had recently set up the Department of Botany
at Moscow University. Although still deeply devoted to
his artistic interests, Gritchenko was not willing to give
up his university training in the sciences, and was
content to work on the study of the reproduction of ferns
in what he referred to as a "quiet and pleasant
institution."32 Gritchenko concurrently continued his
studies of art history. He published several small
pamphlets at the Zelikov publishing house including:
Crisis in Contemporary Art [Krizis v iskusstvu i
sovremennyyi zhivopis]; How We Teach Art in Our Schools
[Kak v nas nauchaiut zhivopis u nashikh shkolakh]; and An
Answer to Tugendkhold, Glagol and Lunacharsky [Otvet Tugenkholdu, Glagolu i Lunacharskomu]. All dealt with contemporary artistic issues and all were published at the artist’s expense. Gritchenko was not satisfied with his output of these short articles and began work on a large work on icons. His goal was to discuss icons not in a religious or historical context, as was the norm, but to explore the artistic virtues of this art form.

Apart from his interest in art theory, Gritchenko continued to paint. In 1913 he began sharing a studio with Tatlin at Ostozhenka 37 known as "the Tower". The two artists gave weekly classes which were attended by young artists and students including Lyubov Popova, Nadezhda Udaltsova and Alexander Vesnin.

With the outbreak of war, Gritchenko began lecturing on botany at the Narodny University, in order to avoid military service. His weekly lectures were attended by working class men and women who could not afford any other form of higher education. In July of 1915 a draft notice cut short Gritchenko’s trip to Crimea and thwarted his efforts to avoid the army. Gritchenko’s conscription into an artillery regiment served to curtail his artistic activity but it did not diminish his talent for employing the influence of his numerous powerful acquaintances. In July of 1916, when his regiment was scheduled for transfer to the front, Gritchenko utilized
his friendship with General Alesakov to obtain a transfer to an ammunition supply unit.\textsuperscript{38} This posting allowed Gritchenko time to pursue his theoretical work on icons. He remained in the army through 1917. Gritchenko had recently met Aleksii Vikulevich Morozov through Ostroukhov.\textsuperscript{39} A. V. Morozov employed Gritchenko to catalogue his collection of icons, enabling him to collect material for the completion of his own book. Gritchenko’s second book came out finally in 1916 in an edition of 500. It included 110 reproductions and was entitled: Questions of Painting: the Russian Icon as Painting [Voproasy zhivopisi: Russkaia ikona kak iskusstvo zhivopisi](hereafter cited as: The Russian Icon as Painting). Two more editions of this book were subsequently published: a second in 1916 and a third in 1917. In this work, Gritchenko analyzed the formal and stylistic elements of the Russian icon, looking at the icon through the lens of French formal stylistic analysis. In this book, as in his first work, Gritchenko was able to strike a philosophical balance, maintaining a stance which was neither xenophobically nationalist, nor excessively Francophilic.

After the Russian Revolution in February of 1917 and the Bolshevik Revolution in October of that year, cultural life -- like the entire social order in the former Russian Empire -- was in turmoil. The fall of the old order
marked the quick rise of the influence of the avant-garde. The appointment of Anatolii Lunacharsky as Commissar of Education seemed to underscore the Bolshevik government’s support for cultural aspirations of the avant-garde.40

Numerous meetings were organized to discuss the reorganization of cultural life. An active participant in these debates, Gritchenko became a member of the newly established Union of Professional Artists and Painters [Professionalnii soyuz khudozhnikov zhivopiscev] in Moscow.41 Under the encouragement of his friends and students Aleksandr, Leonid, and Viktor Vesnin, he further expanded his activities and began lecturing publicly on the new art.42 His championing of avant-garde culture proved fruitful, since he was soon appointed to the Free Art Studios [Svomas] as a professor of painting.43 Gritchenko was also called by Natalia Ivanovna Trotsky to sit on the committee for the preservation of historical monuments.44 His specific responsibility was the restoration of icons housed in the Kremlin.45 At the insistence of Tatlin, Gritchenko also joined the Moscow IZO [Otdel izobrazitelnykh iskusstv -- Department of Fine Arts in the Commissariat of Enlightenment]. In addition to these numerous responsibilities Gritchenko was also offered the directorship of the Morozov collection, a position he declined.46 In the following year he also refused to take the post of director of the Tretyakov
Gallery. Gritchenko rejected both positions since, as he told Aleksandr Shevchenko (1883-1948), he had no desire to become a bureaucrat, but wished to pursue a creative artistic career.47

Gritchenko had been friends with Shevchenko for some years and Gritchenko respected Shevchenko both as an artist and as a theorist. During 1918 the two artists had worked closely48 and sometime in the summer or fall of that year, Gritchenko and Shevchenko organized an artistic collective.49 This organization functioned as an autonomous instructional workshop.50 The purpose of this group was to uphold the principles of the knowledge of the laws of colour, material and structure basic to easel painting.51 In 1919, an exhibit of the works of Gritchenko, Shevchenko and their students was organized by special commissar Ivan Kraitov.52 This show, officially titled the Twelfth State Exhibition; Colour Dynamism and Techtonic Primitivism (Dvenadtsatoi gosudarstvennoi vystavki; Tsvetodynamos i tektonicheskii primitivismo) opened on May 15th, and was housed in the newly instituted Moscow Museum of Painting.53 The exhibit was quite a success and according to Gritchenko it was attended by some 10,000 visitors.54

Despite the success of his exhibition, Gritchenko decided to leave Russia while he still had the opportunity. Defying a travel ban, he journeyed south
through Ukraine. In October, Gritchenko reached Sevastopol. From here Gritchenko managed to find passage to Constantinople\textsuperscript{55} arriving there in November of 1919.\textsuperscript{56} During his extended stay in the Byzantine city, Gritchenko met the American archaeologist Thomas Whitmore, who was working on the restoration of Hagia Sophia.\textsuperscript{57} Whitmore was also a collector and purchased sixty-six of Gritchenko's watercolours. This money enabled Gritchenko to make a trip to Greece in 1921.\textsuperscript{58}

After two years in Constantinople, Gritchenko emigrated to Paris.\textsuperscript{59} He arrived in autumn of 1921 in France with only fifty francs to his name, but he met with immediate success. Twelve of his Constantinople watercolours were accepted for the Salon d'Automne.\textsuperscript{60}

In 1922, Gritchenko had his first solo exhibit in Paris at the Povolotsky Gallery under the title of "Constantinople Blue and Rose". By 1923, he was again able to afford travel abroad and made his second trip to Greece. Paul Guillaume purchased ten of Gritchenko's works set in Greece and also introduced the artist to Alfred Barnes. Barnes purchased seventeen of Gritchenko's works.\textsuperscript{61}

After 1924 Gritchenko left Paris and lived in southern France. There he met and married Lilas Lavelaine de Maubeuge. They made their home in Cagnes.\textsuperscript{62} In the years that followed, Gritchenko travelled widely, making
frequent trips to Spain, Portugal, England and Scandinavia. He also became quite successful in the French art world, and exhibited in the leading galleries of Paris including Paul Guillaume, Bing, Granoff, Druet, l'Élysée, André Weil and Bernheim-Jeune. He also participated in the large Salons, including the Tuileries and d'Automne. He became a member of the Salon d'Automne in 1930. In the 1930's Gritchenko also exhibited widely outside of France and had shows in Madrid, Barcelona, London and Stockholm. His works were displayed in the group exhibits of the Association of Independent Ukrainian Artists [Asotsiatsiia nezalezhnykh ukrainskykh mysttsiv] in Lviv in Western Ukraine. In 1937 the Ukrainian Museum in Lviv sponsored a one-man show of Gritchenko's works.

Apart from his books on art theory, Gritchenko wrote several autobiographical works. In 1930, he published Deux ans à Constantinople [My Two Years in Constantinople], which was a journal of his stay in Constantinople. This French edition was followed in 1961 by a Ukrainian language translation. Gritchenko also wrote a book of his childhood reminiscences, titled L'Ukraine de mes jours bleus [My Azure Days in Ukraine]. First published in French in 1957, and then in Ukrainian a year later. Gritchenko also compiled a series of short articles on his encounters with some twenty-seven French artists,
including André Derain, Raoul Dufy, Paul Signac, Pablo Picasso and Fernand Léger. This book titled *Moi zustrichi i rozmovy z frantsuzkymy mysttsiamy* [My Encounters and Conversations with French Artists] was published in 1962. In 1967 Gritchenko published *Roky buri i natysku* [The Years of Storm and Stress] which was the last book of his series of memoirs. In this book the artist recounted his life in Moscow from 1908 to 1918.

In 1958, to celebrate his 75th birthday, Gritchenko’s friends organized a retrospective of over 200 works at the Ukrainian Institute of America in New York City. In 1963 the president of this Institute inaugurated the Gritchenko Foundation. The Foundation, was responsible for an important segment of Gritchenko’s creative output, including 72 works in various media including paintings, drawings, watercolours and tapestries as well as the artist’s books, posters, photos, notes, letters and assorted documents. It is here that the bulk of Gritchenko’s oeuvre remains.

Although in his later years Gritchenko showed widely in North America, and, as was mentioned, most of his work was in the care of the Gritchenko Foundation in New York, he continued to live and work in the town of Vence in France. He died here at the age of ninety-four on January 28, 1977.
Notes, Chapter II


2. Ibid., pp. 15-19

3. Ibid., p. 170.

4. Ibid., p. 172.

5. Ibid., pp. 172-173.

6. Ibid., p. 171. Kotsiubynsky is best known for *Intermezzo* (1908) which profiles the meditations of an artist and *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* (*Tini zabutykh predkiv*, 1911) a stylized portrayal of Hutzul life in the Carpathian mountains.


8. Ibid., p. 212.

10. Gritchenko’s course of study at the University of Kiev included: botany, plant physiology, zoology and comparative zoology, as well as physics, geology, paleontology, chemistry, cosmology and meteorology. See Alexis Gritchenko, Roky buri i natysku [The Years of Storm and Stress] (New York: Slovo, 1967), p. 15.


12. Ibid., p. 15.

13. Ibid., p. 18.

14. During the summer of 1908 Gritchenko and his colleagues, Denisov, Tarnovsky, Butkovsky and Lentulov, attempted to exploit the popularity of Crimea by organizing a show of their summer’s work in the resort
town of Simeiz. Although they all benefited from the revenue collected by selling tickets to the show, only Gritchenko was able to sell a work during this exhibition. Ibid., pp. 21-22.

15. Ibid., p. 21. Surikov, known for such works as the Boyarina Morozova (1881-87), was the first of the Peredvizhniki ["Wanderers"] to combine a realist style with Russian historical themes.

16. Ibid., p. 21. Apollinarii Vasnetsov was a painter of historical scenes noted for his scrupulous, realistic renderings of scenes from medieval Russian life.

17. Ibid., p. 33.

18. Ibid., p. 22.

19. Sergei Shchukin’s collection included a large number of works by French painters. Shchukin, like his fellow connoisseur Ivan Morozov, purchased works by modern artists who were largely unknown at the time. With the assistance of such Parisian dealers as Durand-Ruel, Druet, Vollard, Bernheim-Jeune and later, Kahnweiler, the two Moscow collectors did much to promote the ideas of the French avant-garde within the Russian Empire. Shchukin’s collection included the works of such Impressionists as Claude Monet, Camille Pissarro, of such Post-Impressionists as Vincent Van Gogh, Paul Gauguin, Paul
Cézanne, as well as the Fauve and post-Fauve paintings
Henri Matisse and a number of Pablo Picasso's pre-Cubist
and early Cubist canvasses. See Marina Bessenova,
"Impressionism and Post-Impressionism in the Hermitage,
Leningrad, and in the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts,
Moscow", *Impressionism and Post-Impressionism* (New York:
Empty Palaces: The Merchant Patrons of Modern Art in Pre-
Revolutionary Russia* (New York: Barrie and Jenkins

20. Ivan Morozov was inspired by his brother's enthusiasm
for French painting. Mikhail, the older of the Morozov
brothers, was an art and literary critic and the first
Russian to take up the collection of modern French
painting. He concentrated his attention primarily on the
works of the Impressionists and their predecessors. Like
his brother, Ivan also collected works by such
Impressionists as Sisley, Pissarro and Renoir, but his
collection also included and focused on the canvasses of
Van Gogh, Gauguin, Cézanne, Signac, Bonnard, Matisse and
Picasso. (Bessonova, p. 19.) Ivan Abramovich Morozov must
not be confused with Aleksii Vikulevich Morozov the
collector of icons. See A. V. Morozov see Chapter II,
note # 39.
21. Ilya Ostoukhov was a prominent collector of fourteenth and fifteenth century Novgorodian icons. See Chapter IV, note # 2.

22. Gritchenko, *Roky buri i natysky*. This autobiographical work concentrates on Gritchenko's years in Moscow (1908-1918).


25. Gritchenko was a particularly good friend of A. Lentulov, and spent several summers with him on the Black Sea. He also lived with Lentulov and his wife from the fall of 1910 through the spring of 1911. It was probably by virtue of Gritchenko’s friendship with Lentulov as much as the quality of his works which prompted Larionov to invite Gritchenko to participate in the first "Knave of Diamonds" exhibit in 1910. Ibid., pp. 31-32.

26. Ibid., p. 55.

27. Alexis Gritchenko, "O gruppe khudozhnikov "Bubnovyi valet." Apollon is of particular interest since it contains detailed and rather pedantic reviews of the exhibitions from 1909 to 1917.


29. Ibid., p.25.

30. This was the journal of the St. Petersburg avant garde’s artists’ association which was also named "Union of Youth". Issues of Union of Youth included translations of LeFauconnier’s writings as well as the text of the Italian Futurist manifesto.

31. This trip is described in detail in Roky buri i natysku, pp. 57-62.

32. Ibid., pp. 64-65.
33. Ibid. p. 68.

34. Ibid., p. 63.


37. Ibid., p. 73.

38. Ibid., p. 76.

39. Ibid., p. 76. Aleksii Vikulevich Morozov was a collector of icons and must not be confused with Ivan Abramovich Morozov the collector of modern art. Beginning in 1913, Aleksii Morozov assembled an extensive collection of icons. In his *Russian Icon as Painting*, Gitchenko discussed this collection at length (see pp. 173-208). Like the Ostroukhov collection most of A. V. Morozov's collection was comprised of fourteenth and fifteenth century works of the Novgorod school. For more on I. A. Morozov see Chapter II, Note #20.

40. Adam Ulam in *The Bolsheviks* suggests that Lenin chose Lunacharky as the Commissar of Education, not because he agreed with his views on art and culture, but because this second-rate author and *bon vivant* was the only Bolshevik vaguely suited for the post. See Adam Ulam, *The Bolsheviks*
(New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1978) p. 203. Nevertheless, the initial enthusiasm of the avant-garde may have been justified, since it was only in the 1920's, with the rise of Stalin after Lenin's death, that it became painfully apparent that the new Bolshevik government was not a supporter of the avant-garde in art and culture.

41. The president and delegate to the Art Section of the Soviet Workers' Deputies of this widely inclusive body was Vladimir Tatlin. In immediate response to the demands of the Revolution the Union of Professional Artists and Painters organized a large show which surveyed the numerous styles of contemporary painting. An enormous exhibition, it included some 741 works by 180 artists, including Griatchenko, and took place in Moscow from May 26 to July 12 1918. See Milner, Tatlin, p. 140.

42. Griatchenko, Roky buri i natysku, p. 83.

43. Ibid., p. 85.

44. Apart from Griatchenko and chairwoman Natalia Trotsky, this committee consisted of some ten members, including Igor Grabar, Aleksandr Shevchenko and Pavel Muratov. See Ibid., pp. 85-86.

45. Ibid., p. 86.
46. Ibid., p. 87.

47. Ibid., p. 93.

48. Ibid., p. 91.

49. Apart from its primary role as a workshop and place of instruction, this collective also served to shelter such people as the collector Ilya Ostroukhov who, prior to the October Revolution, had been universally praised for his patronage of the arts, and like others in his position lived in precarious uncertainty after the Revolution because of their former great wealth. Ibid., p. 93.

50. Ibid., p. 93.

51. Bowlt, Russian Art of the Avant Garde, p. 43.

52. Ibid., p. 95.

53. The Moscow Museum of Painting had been the Salon of Mikhalova before it was nationalized. Ibid., p. 95.

54. Ibid., p. 95.

55. Ibid., pp. 95-99.

57. Ibid., p. 16.

58. Ibid., p. 19.


60. Ibid., p. 38.

61. Ibid., p. 38.

62. Ibid., p. 38.

63. Ibid., p. 38.

64. The Association of Independent Ukrainian Artists [Asotsiatsiia nezalezhnykh ukrainskykh myststsiv] was an association of Western Ukrainian artists of various styles and was active in Lviv from 1930 to 1939. This group organised thirteen group and individual shows. The Association also published five issues of the journal Mystetstvo [Art] between 1932 and 1936. The editor of this journal Pavlo Kovzhun also wrote several monographs on noted Ukrainian artists including a work on Alexis Gritchenko. See Volodymyr Kubijovyc, ed. Encyclopedia of Ukraine, vol. 1 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), pp. 130-131.

65. Ibid., pp. 79-80.
66. Ibid., p. 39.

67. Ibid., p. 84.

CHAPTER III
THE INTELLECTUAL INFLUENCE OF THE FRENCH AVANT-GARDE

Throughout Gritchenko’s writings one notes that when he accepted French formalism as a superior critical tool, and Cubism as the ultimate contemporary style, that he also took on the various dialectic and intellectual accoutrements of the French avant-garde. Primary among these was his ostensibly scientific approach to art and his often radical, sharply critical tone. The former reflected the avant-garde’s support of the new world that science and technology would build; the latter showed that the avant-garde was working to defeat the ancien régime so as to make this new world possible. The belief in progress, science, and revolution was not particular to France but the avant-garde approach to these ideas did most certainly grow out of the French tradition.

In his discussion of the formation of the Parisian avant-garde, Renato Poggioli cites Gabriel-Désiré Laverdant’s work entitled De la mission de l’art et du rôle des artistes [The Mission of Art and the Role of Artists]. The passage reads as follows:

Art, the expression of society, manifests, in its highest soaring, the most advanced social tendencies: it is the forerunner and the revealer.
Therefore, to know whether art worthily fulfills its proper mission as initiator, whether the artist is truly of the avant-garde, one must know where Humanity is going, know what the destiny of the human race is... Along with the hymn to happiness, the dolorous and despairing ode... To lay bare with a brutal brush all the brutalities, all the filth, which are at the base of our society.¹

Laverdant defines the artist’s role as that of the prophet and of the revolutionary. The writings of the twentieth century avant-garde, of both Western and Eastern Europe, abound with messianic and revolutionary rhetoric. What is significant is that by the twentieth century the avant-garde had grown tired of simply revealing the filth and brutalities of society, and began to work towards a totally new order.

Although later movements, such as Futurism, strove to change the entire world, the avant-garde concepts which Gritchenko accepted were those of the Cubists who sought only to create a new art. Nevertheless, if we examine the Cubists or the more militant Futurists, or any other avant-garde style, it is significant that although each aspired to a new order, their policies were never outlined in a clear political program. Avant-garde artists simply accepted the revolutionary political energy of the period and metamorphosed it to purely artistic ends. Vasilii Kandinsky’s writings often abound with messianic and revolutionary fervour. In his 1912 essay On the Problem of Form he wrote:
The breaking up of the soulless-material life of the nineteenth century; that is, the falling down of the material supports which were thought to be the only firm ones, the decay and dissolution of the individual parts... [Which will be followed by:] The building up of the psychic-spiritual life of the twentieth century which we are experiencing and which manifests and embodies itself even now in strong, expressive, and definite forms.\(^2\)

Just as avant-garde artists and critics often used obliquely political references, they also tended to discuss their ideas on art using scientific or mathematical terms. Of course these scientific ideas were gently transmuted to suit the art being discussed. Apollinaire's references to "Scientific Cubism" or "Physical Cubism" are good examples of this tendency.\(^3\)

Perhaps the best example is the latter's discussion of the fourth dimension:

The new painters do not propose...to be geometers. But it may be said that geometry is to the plastic arts what grammar is to the art of the writer. Today, scientists no longer limit themselves to the three dimensions of Euclid. The painters have been led quite naturally, one might say by intuition, to preoccupy themselves with the new possibilities of spatial measurement which, in the language of the modern studios, are designated by the term: the fourth dimension...I must point out that the fourth dimension...has come to stand for the aspirations and premonitions of the many young artists who contemplate Egyptian, Negro and oceanic sculptures, meditate on various scientific works, and live in the anticipation of a sublime art.\(^4\)

The idea of the "sublime" or "new" or "pure" art the Cubists were anticipating was clearly in keeping with their revolutionary and scientific ideas. It was not, however, an exclusively Cubist invention.
The concept of "pure art" is a logical extension of the earlier idea of "art for art's sake", and it is an important step in the development of formalist thought. The banner of "pure art" was taken up by the avant-garde who, in their quest to "purify", quickly abandoned academic canons. They energetically began to experiment with the basic elements of art in order to establish the "laws" of their discipline. The rejection of accepted dictums and a preference to empirical data reflects the modernist attachment to the scientific method.\(^5\) Formalist theory also reflected the egalitarian spirit of the times. Artists were loath to have their works evaluated within an academic hierarchy, which ranked history paintings above portraits and portraits above landscape. In fact they rejected all hierarchies in favour of the democratization of subjects allowed for by a formalist analysis. Thus each work was to be judged on its own merits.

Gritchenco enthusiastically praised Cézanne for his role in the evolution of "pure painting". He wrote that Cézanne "devoted fifty years of obstinate and inspired toil to clear the refuse and mud which obscured the pure, golden beauty of the art of painting".\(^6\) Formalist analysis, which Gritchenco called "the blessed tongue of the pure form of painting,"\(^7\) not only changed the function of contemporary painting, but also allowed contemporary
artists new insights into the art of the past. This was of great interest to Gritchenko, who felt that the history of art "is full of hidden ideas which are of great interest, since they reveal numerous points of view and artistic approaches common to different nations." Art of the past, in Gritchenko’s view, was to be judged on whether or not the artists aspired to the "higher resolution of the conception of painting." If a work, or body of works, could be appreciated over the chasm of centuries, then they reflected these common artistic ideas, which are the "laws of art". If they did not, then the works were worthless. His ideas are firmly aligned with French formalist thought, especially those of Roger Allard whom he quotes at length. Like Allard, Gritchenko felt that it is essential to "rethink the painting repertoire and remove from it all retrospective, aesthetic, and decorative elements; to concentrate only on plastic form, eliminating all extraneous colour and line." Gritchenko felt that in the quest for "pure art" there was also no room for the "enemies of art" and their attendant, vacuous styles. This refers to styles, such as Impressionism, which, by copying only the appearance of the surface of an object, "hide a deep nothingness" ["maskiruet hluboke nichtozhestvo"]. He condemns the "academicians, the lovers of literature, the mystics and the journalists" all of whom, in his view, worked to
imprison "pure art". He specifically identifies those contemporary Russian styles which he feels to be injurious to the cause of the new art, i.e., the style of the Peredvizhnniki and related realists, for their love of narrative and impressionistic tendencies; the members of the Mir iskusstva group, for their eclecticism and retrospectivism; and the Neoprimitivists for their anecdotal and illustrative tendencies.14

Although Gritchenko's contemporaries in the Russian avant-garde such as M. Larionov15 and K. Malevich16 advocate similar views in regard to "pure art", Gritchenko's approach is most closely paralleled by his countryman Oleksander Bohomazov (1880-1930). Like Gritchenko, Bohomazov felt that artists must rid themselves of all excess baggage and work to discover the elements of art. In the catalogue for the Koltso exhibit of 1914,17 Bohomazov wrote:

We place as our task the liberation of painterly elements from the clichés which shackle them. We protest against the imposition on these elements of conditions alien to them, eclipsing and squandering the painterly sense of the picture (e.g., the literary narrative). Therefore, we welcome the striving of the artist to shatter the shell in which his artistic personality had been imbedded by Academism...Every art is endowed with specific elements: poetry—the word; music-sound, etc. Painting governs four elements: Line, Form, Color, and the Picture Surface".18

Gritchenko's assimilation of the contemporary elements of French avant-garde theory more closely reflects the ideas advocated by the Ukrainian avant-garde than it does
programs of the Russian avant-garde. This curious situation does much to illustrate the differences between these two groups which, unfortunately, are often considered to be a single entity. Artists of the Russian avant-garde like K. Malevich, V. Tatlin and E. Lissitsky (1890-1941) pushed formalist logic to the extreme and worked with only the most basic formal elements in their compositions, thus abandoning figurative representation in favour of geometrical forms. While the Russian avant-garde concentrated on non-representational experiments the members of the Ukrainian avant-garde, like Gritchenko, used formalist analysis in their exploration and adaptation of local traditions. Such artists as Hryhoryi Narbut (1886-1920) drew on seventeenth century Kozak Baroque manuscripts and Ukrainian folk motifs as bases for his graphic design work. Much of the Ukrainian avant-garde of the 1920’s shared Gritchenko’s interest in ancient icons. Like Gritchenko, Mykhailo Boichuk (1882-1939?), Oleksander Bohomazov and Anatol Petrytsky (1895-1962) and many other members of The Ukrainian avant-garde combined the lessons they learned from their studies of icons with their interpretations of modern French art.
Notes Chapter III


4. Ibid., pp. 223-4.

5. More often than not, the fantastic, pseudo-scientific programs developed by artists resulted in interesting works, but did not bring the artists any closer to establishing "laws" for art that could parallel those of the sciences. A good example is Mikhail Larionov’s

6. Alexis Gritchenko, O sviazakh russkoi zhivopisi s Vizantiei i Zapadom, XXIII-XX vv.: mysli zhivopistsa [On the Ties of Russian Painting with Byzantium and the West, XXIII-XX centuries: Thoughts of a Painter] (Moscow: A. Gritchenko, 1913), p.69. It is interesting that Gritchenko chose to describe Cézanne's work with a metaphor which paralleled the efforts of contemporary conservators who had recently begun to clean ancient icons so as to uncover the brilliance of their colours and the beauty of their gold.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid., p. 80.


Médiations Esthétiques mentions Roger Allard and Olivier Hourcade among the group of writers who supported "Physical Cubism" in the press. See H. B. Chipp Theories of Modern Art, p. 248.

11. Gritchenko, On the Ties of Russian Painting, p. 89. Cf. Roger Allard, "Sur quelques peintures," Les Marches du Sud-Ouest, Paris, June 1911, pp. 57-64. Although Gritchenko is quoting Allard, on French art, he sees the same flaws in Russian art, since both the academic artists and the members of the Mir iskusstva group indulged in retrospectivism, while the Symbolists advocated aestheticism. Finally, the work of the Slavic Revival artists as well as that of the Neoprimitivists and the Mir iskusstva artists was highly decorative.


13. Ibid. p. 69. He chooses these particular enemies for the following crimes: academicians for their adherence to outmoded canons, lovers of literature for their insistence on narratives in works of art, mystics for obstructing the artistic value of icons with mystical cultism, and journalists for their shallowness of interpretation.

15. In the *Rayist Manifesto* Larionov wrote:

Hail to our rayonnist style of painting independent of real forms, existing and developing according to the laws of painting...From here begins the true freeing of art; a life which proceeds only according to the laws of painting as an independent entity, painting with its own forms, colour and timbre.


16. Malevich wrote in the *Suprematist Manifesto*:


17. The *Koltso* [Ring] exhibition was in many ways a landmark in the development of the Ukrainian avant-garde. Some twenty-one Kievian artists (including Alexandra Exter), interested in formal experimentation, exhibited a total of 306 works in this exhibit. The significance of this exhibit is that unlike, earlier endeavors, it purported specific aesthetic and formalist goals. See Myroslava M. Mudrak, *The New Generation and Artistic Modernism in the Ukraine* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: U.M.I. Research Press, 1986), p. 105-106.
18. Quoted in Ibid., p. 105.
CHAPTER IV

THE INFLUENCE OF EASTERN RITE ICONS

Icons were familiar in their numerous liturgical and spiritual nuances to Russian and Ukrainian artists, unlike the unfamiliar ritualistic functions represented by African and Oceanic sculptures and masks that influenced the Western avant-gardes. Prior to Gritchenko's generation, however, the icon was examined from an exclusively religious or historical viewpoint. The academic aesthetic prevalent at the beginning of the twentieth century in Russia considered ancient Byzantine icons to be stylistically primitive and all but equal to the works of African and Oceanic "savages". So it is ironic that, although the artists of the Ukrainian and Russian avant-gardes understood the numerous religious and cultural overtones of the icon image, they nevertheless took ancient icons to be examples of "primitive" art. It was the influence of French formalist theory which revealed the value of the icon in the development of modern styles and it was only artists such as Gritchenko, armed with a French formalist vocabulary, who could examine icons as art and compare the styles of ancient masters to those of the most modern artists. Gritchenko
emphasized that the primary value of such private collections as those of Sergei Shchukin, Ilya Ostroukhov and of Ivan Morozov, lay not in their art historical significance, but in that they revealed the correlation between modern and ancient art and were thus an invaluable resource for the young artist.

It is difficult to overestimate the influence the Eastern Rite icon has had on the art and culture of Russia and Ukraine. The icon, like the Byzantine Rite, has permeated nearly every aspect of life in Russia and Ukraine for the nearly one thousand years since the Grand Prince Volodymyr accepted Christianity from Byzantium in 988. Thus in order to understand more fully the attachment which both the Ukrainian and the Russian avant-gardes felt to the Eastern Rite icon, it is necessary first to examine both the theological and contemporary interpretations of this art form.

Unlike religious images in the West, the primary function of the icon was not to teach the illiterate through depiction of Biblical narratives in art but to serve as a instrument of prayer and to act as a visible symbol of numerous theological dicta. Much of the Orthodox dogma on the divine image was distilled in the theological writings of St. John Damascene, who wrote his anti-iconoclast Apologies during the first iconoclast period (726 - 787) and later by St. Theodore the Studite,
who wrote during the second of the iconoclast controversies (807 - 843). The iconoclasts' basic contention was that those who venerated icons and used images of holy personages in private and liturgical prayer were, in fact, guilty of idolatry. In response to the iconoclast accusations, St. John Damascene expounded the Orthodox view of the image as material proof of the verity of the Incarnation. In his On the Divine Images, St. John argued that:

In former times, God being without form or body, could in no way be represented. But today, since God has appeared in the flesh and lived among men, I can represent what is visible in God.

The concept behind the icon was therefore to depict both the physical likeness of Christ and to attempt to convey the spiritual aspect of Christ’s dual natures. Thus, Byzantine icon painters relied on ancient models, which, according to tradition, were painted during the life of Christ or were miraculous images. In addition to this uniformity of depiction, the painter of icons also tended to flatten the figures in his works and to employ such anti-naturalistic devices as reverse perspective in order to emphasize the non-material, spiritual quality of the icon image.

In terms of content, the image is of equal importance to the Scriptures and numerous Apostolic and Patristic writings in the Eastern Rite. The Kondakion of the Feast of the Triumph of Orthodoxy states that Orthodox
Christians believe that both the word and image are vehicles of salvation. Leonid Ouspensky defined the role of the icon as one that transcends the teaching of Christian dogmas. He believed that the icon furthered the spiritual education of the individual by acting as a guide to prayer. Apart from its function as a vehicle for veneration, the icon could also serve as an illustration to the faithful that the proper state for prayer is an attitude of peace and serenity, free from earthly distractions. According to the teaching of St. Basil the Great set out in The Thirty Chapters to Amphilochius on the Holy Image, the honour given to the image is transferred to the prototype. Careful to avoid accusations of idolatry, therefore, Orthodox theologians painstakingly differentiated between veneration and worship. St. John Damascene wrote: "I do not worship matter, but I worship the creator of matter who became matter for my sake... and who, through matter accomplished my salvation." Thus, although the icon was to be venerated, only God was to be worshipped.

Since the icon image was not only part of the essential liturgical composition of a church, but also an indispensible aid to prayer, icons were widespread in Orthodox households. The icon, an ever-present fixture in homes, represented a range of traditions; from basic theological truths to regional folk beliefs. It is not
surprising that various regional and folk beliefs, often incompatible with an Orthodox theological interpretation, developed over the centuries. Many icons were believed to be miraculous and to possess powers above and beyond those theologically inherent in the images. One such miraculous image of the fifteenth century was the narrative work depicting the battle between the Novgorodian and the Suzdalian armies. An icon within an icon, The Battle between Novgorod and Suzdal shows the miracle-working image of the Virgin of the Sign which guaranteed the victory of Novgorod over Suzdal in the twelfth century. This illustrate how miraculous images were jealously guarded by the cities and churches insofar as these image served as symbols of the piety and power of their owners. Such images also served as centres for municipal or regional icon cults.

In support of this attitude was the close association of the Russian Orthodox Church with the Tsarist State to produce a messianic view of Russian Orthodoxy. This mission is clearly reflected in the writings of Eugene N. Trubetskoik, who advocated a sort of Russian nationalist mysticism. He felt that the renewed interest in ancient icons, which came with the end of the nineteenth century and continued into the early twentieth century, heralded the renewal of Russia’s mystical mission. He also felt that the newly applied cleaning
techniques that restored icons to their original beauty served as a metaphor for the fate of the entire Russian Orthodox Church. In his 1916 essay, "Russia and Her Icons", he wrote:

Again the fate of the ancient icon coincides with that of the Russian Church. In life as in painting, the same thing happens: the darkened face is freed from age-old layers of gold, smoke and tasteless, unskilled overpainting. The image of the world-embracing church that shines for us in the cleaned icon is miraculously revived in the real life of the church. In life as in painting, we see the undamaged, untouched image of the church-sober. And we firmly believe that now as before his holy unity will be the salvation of Russia.14

As can be expected, the liturgical import and mystical significance of icons served to prevent them from being considered as art objects well into the nineteenth, and even into the twentieth century. At this time, icon art was generally not treated as an independent discipline, but was discussed in connection with either religion, archaeology, history or ethnography. Thus, much to Gritchkenko's frustration, contemporary writers either examined the theological and mystical implications of the icon, or they approached these images from a purely historical viewpoint. Such writers as N. P. Kondakov, I. Pokrovsky and N. P. Likhachev15 helped to educate the public about the historical and iconographic meaning of icons, but they did little to help dissipate the nineteenth century disdain for the "barbaric" and "primitive" Byzantine style. This characterization, the
result of the prevalent academic aesthetic, which favoured naturalistic portrayals, was the main impediment to the wider appreciation of Byzantine icons as a viable art form. Even the large exhibit of icons at the Second All-Russian Folk Art Exhibition (1913), organized by the Moscow Institute of Archaeology, which helped to popularize the icon, tended to emphasize the historical, rather than the artistic significance, of the works. This situation was further aggravated by collectors who, in Gritchenko's estimation, were motivated by neither a love for, nor an understanding of, ancient icons but by snobbish antiquarianism. Finally, as Gritchenko himself pointed out, the ideological mysticism, which combined ardent Russian nationalism with strong Orthodox beliefs, advocated by such critics as Trubetskoï, was also not conducive to a living art.

Gritchenko believed that such outmoded criteria as antiquarian interests, ideologically-mystical values, lyrical appeal, and so on, in the appreciation of icon art needed to be replaced by formal analysis. The relative objectivity of formalist criteria allowed the viewer to evaluate a work on its own merits. Thus freed from the subjectivity of the narrow aesthetics of the period, the artist or critic could, with only a limited aesthetic prejudice, appreciate works from various periods. Formalist analysis led Gritchenko to conclude that
artists, regardless of their nationality or era, were faced by the same set of formal problems.

Indeed, the need to resolve the problems of form, balance and colour was common to artists throughout history. Thus, Gritchenko judged icons to be on par with the most innovative contemporary art, since he felt that icon painters, like modern artists, worked beyond ideological programs towards a higher resolution of these basic artistic problems. Ultimately, the most compelling aspect of Gritchenko’s theoretical works is that he aligned the art of Russia and Ukraine with international trends. Tracing the evolution of the Byzantine icon tradition from ancient Greece and equating the Kievan, Galician, Novgorodian and Moscovite schools with their Italo-Byzantine and Proto- and Early Renaissance counterparts,19 Gritchenko’s carefully structured arguments lead the reader to accept the artistic heritage of the Russian and Ukraine avant-gardes as equal in value to the Western artistic tradition.

The culminating point of Gritchenko’s writing is advisory in character, emphasizing that the goals of the avant-garde in Russia should be the same as those of the Western avant-garde movements. Hence Gritchenko attempted to go beyond the rather xenophobic and anti-European attitudes of the Russian avant-garde per se, by propagating an international modernism. He felt that the
art and theory of the French avant-garde served as a basis for an art that was equal throughout the world. Thus, Cubism and its numerous national variants, like the Byzantine icon style with its regional variants, illustrated the successful exploration and application of "the laws of art" by artists of different countries and time periods.

In *The Russian Icon as Painting*, Gritchenko analysed the Novgorodian icon of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and argues, on a practical level, that the methods Novgorodian icon painters employed for the resolution of the formal problems of painting are valuable lessons for contemporary artists. He compared the facility and originality of the Novgorodian painters to that of the Cubists, for example, and in this manner illustrated how works from both periods are invaluable lessons which can be used by the modern artist in the creation of a contemporary style. Gritchenko's own paintings of the late 1910's and 1920's, though rare, are good examples of this approach. Such works as Gritchenko's *Self-portrait* (1923, Gritchenko Foundation Collection) combine a Byzantine predilection for simplification of the human figure with a Cubist faceting of forms and edges. The artist also incorporated planes of intense, saturated colours, reminiscent of Novgorodian icons, with a painterly application which owes much to
Cubism.

Although the members of the Russian avant-garde lost interest in the example of the ancient icon soon after the decline of Neoprimitivism in 1913 and 1914, the icon was an important factor in the development of the Ukrainian avant-garde. Such Ukrainian artists such as Mykhailo Boichuk, Oleksander Bohomazov and Anatol Petrytsky, employed, in their paintings of the late 1910's and 1920's, a blend of Byzantine stylization with Cubist faceting of forms, which was similar in style to Gritchenko's work of this period. Thus both Gritchenko's theories and his painting style were more closely affiliated with the Ukrainian avant-garde of the 1920's than with contemporary Russian trends. So although Gritchenko's work concerning icons may be of minor interest to the student of Russian modernism, his theoretical writings serve as a valuable resource for the scholars of the Ukrainian avant-garde.
(Photograph taken from Raymond Carmot, et al., *Alexis Gričenko, sa vie, son oeuvre*. Paris: Quatre Vents, 1964)
Notes Chapter IV

1. Sergei Shchukin was one of Moscow's major collectors of modern art. His collection is discussed in more detail in Chapter II, note # 19.

2. Although Ilya Ostroukhov did purchase some modern works, the bulk of his collection was devoted to icons, primarily Novgorodian fourteenth and fifteenth century works. In The Russian Icon as Painting Gritchenko devoted a subchapter (pp. 153-173) to the Ostroukhov collection. He pointed out that Ostroukhov was the first to collect icons as products of art and not as liturgical antiques. Gritchenko included an extensive discussion of the individual icons of the collections in his work.

3. Like Shchukin, Ivan Morozov was an important collector of modern art. Ivan Morozov's collection is discussed in more detail in Chapter II, note # 20.


6. The iconoclast controversies began during the reign of Leo III (717-741). Historians differ in their interpretations of Leo III’s motives for promoting iconoclasm. Some believe that he wished to unify the Empire by abolishing icons, which were one of the main obstacles which separated Christians, Moslems and Jews. However, many scholars feel that the main aim of the iconoclast decrees was to reduce the influence of the Church, lessen the power of the monasteries and free education from the control of the clergy. The Church opposed Leo III’s attempts to regulate religious doctrine and advocated a strict jurisdictional demarcation between religious and secular affairs. Because of the widespread ecclesiastic opposition to his policies, Leo III ruthlessly replaced dissenting clergy with functionaries who were loyal to him. Iconoclasm reached its peak during the reign of Constantine Copronymus (741-755) the son of Leo III. Constantine Copronymus wrote a treatise which summarized iconoclast doctrine and assembled the iconoclast council of 754. In 787 the patriarch Tarasius (784-806), with the support of the regent Irene, convened the Seventh Ecumenical council in Nicaea which reestablished the doctrine of the veneration of the image.
After a lull of 27 years, Leo V the Armenian (813-820) renewed the iconoclasm by espousing a doctrine based on the writings of John the Grammarian. The revised iconoclast dogmas sought to forbid the veneration of icons without totally suppressing this images. Patriarch St. Nicephorus (810-815), with the support of 270 monastic leaders and clergy, categorically rejected all imperial intervention in Church matters and consequently, iconoclasm was renewed. The second iconoclast period concluded with the death of the Emperor Theophanes in 843 and with the ascension of the regent Theorora. A council under the patriarch St. Methodius (842-846) confirmed the dogma established by the Seventh Ecumenical council. See Leonid Ouspensky, Theology of the Icon (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1978).


8. Tradition holds that St. Luke the Evangelist was also a painter who made numerous portraits of Christ during his life. In theory, all icon images depicting Christ are based on these originals or on the so-called "icons not made by human hands" (vera ikon). The latter was created, when Christ’s face was miraculously imprinted on the veil
of St. Veronica.


12. Ibid., pp 8-9.


15. The writings of these authors known and listed by Gritsenko, *The Russian Icon as Painting*, p. 17, is represented by the following major works: N. P. Kondakov *Istoryia vyzantiiskogo iskusstva i ikonografii* [The History of Byzantine Art and Iconography], 1876 and *Ikonografiia Bogomateri* [The Iconography of the Mother of God], 1911, 1915.); I. Pokrovsky *Ocherki pam’iatnikov khristianskoi ikonografii i iskusstva* [An Outline of the Monuments of Christian Art and Iconography], 1900; and N. P. Likhachev, *Istoricheskoie znachenie italo-greckoi ikonopisi* [The Historic Meaning of Italo-Greek Icon Painting], 1911, and *Kratkoe opisanie ikon P. M. Tretiakova* [A Short Description of the P. M. Tretiakov
Icon Collection], 1905.


17. Ibid., p. 261.

18. Ibid., p. 260.

19. Gritchenko felt that the Ukrainian and Russian schools of icon painting as well as the Italo-Byzantine, Proto- and Early Renaissance schools were directly influenced not only by Byzantine art, but also by antique painting particularly by Hellenistic miniatures. He argued that the icon painters of the East both shared common origins and were directly influenced by the works of Italian artists. In The Russian Icon as Painting, Gritchenko devoted Chapter XIII ("Kharakteristika novgorodskoi shkoly v eia razvitii" ["The Characteristics of the Development of the Novgorodian School"], pp. 219-238) to the parallels between Novgorodian and Italo-Byzantine painting. In his discussion of Andrei Rublev, Gritchenko draws the parallels between naturalistic traits of Rublev's and Duccio's paintings, arguing that Rublev was influenced by Italian painting which reached Russia through the Galician and Kievan schools. See Gritchenko, The Russian Icon as Painting, Chapter VI, "Andrei Rublev i Dionisii Glushynskii", pp. 87-95.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Although it is currently in vogue to discuss the influences a national culture has on given artists, it is often difficult for scholars to establish clear frameworks for such an analysis. Eager to determine the characteristics which distinguish one artistic movement from another, academics have been reluctant to circumscribe the features of modern national styles. It is quite reasonable to suggest that an artist of a given nationality would share common stylistic traits and aesthetic ideals with his fellow countrymen. It is also fairly clear that an artist's development is, first of all, greatly dependent on his cultural and intellectual upbringing, on his indigenous education, and on the cultural environment of which he is a part. However, when critics attempt a "cultural analysis" of an artist's work, they are often greatly drawn to oversimplifications and stereotypes. This tendency seems to have been particularly evident when critics attempted to establish the characteristics common to Ukrainian artists of the early twentieth century.¹

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Among the primary fallacies of this approach is the over-romanticized image that Russian and Western writers have of Ukraine, most recently evidenced in John Milner's study of Vladimir Tatlin:

Kiev, Kharkov and Odessa, cities with a lively cultural life, looked south to Crimea and the Black Sea and east towards the Caspian Sea in contrast to the western focus of cities further north. Rural areas of the south were as close, in culture and geography, to the East as to the West; Islamic Astrakhan, Samarkand and Tashkent were as near as Paris or Berlin.²

The exotic, Asiatic tinge with which Milner attempts to colour Ukrainian culture prevents him from acknowledging the rather more mundane linguistic and cultural differences which distinguish Ukraine from Russia. What is also often ignored is the fact that an artist, although born in Ukraine, need not have been influenced by Ukrainian culture. Since Ukrainian culture was, from the middle of the nineteenth century, deemed to be secondary to the Russian culture of the Tsarist Empire, that is to say, subservient to Russian culture, an artist not of Ukrainian heritage could grow up in Ukraine fully in the bosom of "Great Russian" culture.³ Clearly, such characteristics as: "epic humor", "bright and vigorous style", "exuberant composition" and so on, mentioned by Valentine Marcadé, are not the only ones that serve to distinguish Russian art from Ukrainian art. While the styles of such artists as A. Gritchenko, A. Petrytsky and H. Narbut do display these characteristics, their works
differ greatly from the dry, unemotive and rationally structured art of V. Yermilov, V. Meller and M. Boichuk.⁴

Even though contemporary Soviet critics argue that there is no need to differentiate between the two nationalities, the distinction does become a crucial issue when discussing the art of the early post- Revolutionary period: 1917-1930. During this period, the relative autonomy of Narkompros [Ministry of Education] of the Ukrainian Republic allowed Ukrainian avant-garde artists and writers to create a vibrant and flourishing rebirth of a national culture. This renaissance thrived until the early 1930’s in Ukraine while, ironically, in Russia the avant-garde was under attack by the mid-1920’s. When the Soviet authorities did finally purge the artistic and literary communities in the Ukrainian S.S.R. however, their methods were far more despotic and devastating than in the R.S.F.S.R.

It seems that the significance of Gritchenko’s theories lies not in their influence on the Moscow avant-garde but in that they foreshadow the credos of such writers as M. Zerov and M. Khvylovy -- leading figures of VAPLITE⁵ and of the Ukrainian artistic and literary avant-gardes of the 1920’s. Gritchenko’s probing of art to discover the "laws" he believed were to serve as a basis for the "new art" had led him to the exploration and evaluation of his native artistic heritage as well as to
the study of contemporary Western models. Gritchenko felt that a synthesis of these sources would serve as a foundation for modern Ukrainian art. This attachment to heritage and fear of provincialism caused by inbreeding was criticized by a number of Gritchenko's contemporaries. On the literary front, for instance Mykola Zerov, felt that writers needed to reevaluate their Ukrainian literary heritage and tradition, and to become fully acquainted with world literature. Zerov, like Gritchenko, also felt that writers and artists needed to set themselves high standards, to strive for artistic refinement. These values were exemplified in the realm of the visual arts by the careers of such artists as M. Boichuk and V. Yermilov. Both these artists, like Gritchenko, used the study of the icon tradition as a basis for the creation of contemporary styles.

The artists and writers of the 1920's with Gritchenko in their midst, advocated not the simple adoption of western or ancient forms but the synthesis of both, a synthesis which was the result of experimentation and diligent labour. Khvylovych, called this the process of "Europeanization":

The whole crux of the matter is how we shall pass through this process of Europeanization: as pupils, as unconscious provincials who can only copy the exterior, or as mature and grown-up people -- who know the nature and consequences of such an appropriation of culture and therefore take from its inner core what is most essential. We must be well in front, not lagging behind: we must approach
the sources themselves..., and not accept anything on trust; we must learn how to read music, not learn, like children, by ear.\textsuperscript{8}

So too, Gritchenko felt that only through an understanding of the "laws of art" -- as exemplified in both the West and in the East, in Cubism and in the Byzantine icon -- could the artist create works of enduring quality. The close analysis of Gritchenko's theoretical writings lays bare this position. His theories reflected not so much the views of the Moscow avant-garde circles he frequented as they foreshadowed the theories of the Ukrainian avant-garde of the 1920's. Contrary to the methods of the members of the Russian avant-garde, therefore, Gritchenko advocated the synthesis of modern Western principles with those of a local artistic heritage in order to produce a solid and original contemporary style aiming at world class standard.
Notes Chapter V

1. Apollinaire's relegation of M. Boichuk and the other members of the Neo-Byzantine school to the status of artisans from the provinces, is a good example of such a superficial treatment. In his March 19, 1910 article "The Vernissage" on the 1910 Salon de Indépendants, Apollinaire wrote:

let us pass on to the School of Byzantine Revival, which includes three painters -- three artisans, rather -- two men and a woman: Boitchuk [sic], Kasperowitch, and Mlle. Segno. The ambition of these artists is to preserve intact the traditions of religious painting in Little Russia. The trouble is that, having purposely confined themselves to an imitative technique, they are not yet skillful enough to adapt it to a modern subject; despite all their good will, when they paint a gentleman in a stiff collar, all their Byzantinism disappears, and there only remains the slightly awkward painting of Little Russians who have everything to learn about modern painting, which is very different and more difficult, in the end, than that of the gilded icons of the cathedrals in the Ukraine.

2. John Milner, *Vladimir Tatlin and the Russian Avant-Garde* (New Haven: Yale University Press), p. 7. Milner probably based his comments on A. Shevchenko's "We Who Advocate Neoprimativism as the Artist's Religion Say:.." In this essay, Shevchenko makes some rather farfetched claims pertaining to the closeness of Russia to the East.

Shevchenko claims that:

> Russia and the East have been indissolubly linked from as early as the Tartar invasions, and the spirit of the Tartars, of the East, has become so rooted in our life that at times it is difficult to distinguish where a national feature ends and where an eastern influence begins.

See Bowlt, *Russian Art of the Avant Garde*, pp. 44 -54. Ignoring the cultural, linguistic and religious differences and the historical animosities between Ukrainian and Russian and their Asian neighbors, Shevchenko attempted to perpetuate the myth of cultural kinship with the East. This myth was particularly popular at this time with those who felt it was essential to reject all Western influences.


5. Mykola Zerov (1830-1938?), the Neo-Classicalist writer, was well known for his theoretical writings on Ukrainian culture and for his translations of Classical literature. Mykola Khvylovy (pseudonym of Mykola Fitilov, 1893-1933), an outstanding writer and theorist, was the spiritual leader of VAPLITE (*Vilna Akademiia Proletarskoi Literatury*) [Free Academy of Proletarian Literature]. See George S. N. Luckyj, *Literary Politics in the Soviet Ukraine 1917-1934* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956) and G. S. N. Luckyj, *Vaplitianskiy Zbirnyk* [The Vaplite Collection] (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1977).


7. Ibid.
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