

ПРОБЛЕМИ НА ИЗКУСТВОТО

ТРИМЕСЕЧНО СПИСАНИЕ ЗА ТЕОРИЯ, ИСТОРИЯ И КРИТИКА НА ИЗКУСТВОТО

ART STUDIES QUARTERLY

1

ИНСТИТУТ ЗА ИЗСЛЕДВАНЕ НА ИЗКУСТВОТА
ПРИ БЪЛГАРСКА АКАДЕМИЯ НА НАУКИТЕ – СОФИЯ

ISSN 0032-9371

ГОДИНА 47-ма 2014

СЪДЪРЖАНИЕ



Ружа Маринска. Сирак Скитник и неговият Петербург	3
Камелия Николова. Сирак Скитник като режисьор в Народния театър	10
Бистра Рангелова. „Градът” на Сирак Скитник.....	16
Пламен В. Петров, Рамона Димова. Първите учители по художество на Панайот Тодоров и неговото богословско образование	22
Светлана Панчева. Из скиталчествата на Сирака в театъра или за театралната критика като съдба и убеждение	30
Красимир Илиев. Сирак Скитник – бележки към хронологията на картините му.....	34
Илинка Чергарова, Петя Пенкова. Палитрата на Сирак Скитник.....	39
Галина Декова. Сирак Скитник и художествената критика от първата петилетка (1948-1953).....	45
Янко Маринов. Потъналата катедрала на Сирак Скитник	48
Станислава Георгиева, Янко Маринов. Панайот Тодоров, музиката и радиото	51
Бойка Дзипалска, Пламен В. Петров. Паметта за Сирак Скитник в българските архиви.....	55
РЕЗЮМЕТА.....	62

CONTENTS

Ruzha Marinska. Sirak Skitnik's Petersburg	3
Kamelia Nikolova. Sirak Skitnik as a director at the National Theatre.....	10
Bistra Rangelova. Sirak Skitnik's City.....	16
Plamen V. Petrov, Ramona Dimova. Panayot Todorov's first teachers in art and his theological education	22
Svetlana Pancheva. Sirak's Journeys through Theatre or Drama or Criticism as Destiny and Conviction.....	30
Krasimir Iliev. Sirak Skitnik: Notes on his Timeline	34
Ilinka Chergarova, Petia Penkova. On Sirak Skitnik's Palette	39
Galina Dekova. Sirak Skitnik and the Art Criticism of the First Five-year Plan (1949-1953).....	45
Yanko Marinov. Sirak Skitnik's Sunken Cathedral.....	48
Stanislava Georgiava, Yanko Marinov. Panayot Todorov: Music Creator on Radio	51
Boyka Dzipalska, Plamen V. Petrov. The Memory of Sirak Skitnik in Bulgarian Archives	55
SUMMARIES.....	62



SUMMARIES

SIRAK SKITNIK'S PETERSBURG *Ruzha Marinaska*

The article deals with the influence of Russian school of art on Sirak Skitnik's work and personality focusing on his studies in St Petersburg (1908–1912) and holding the belief that those years proved to generally shape his views on art.

An attempt is made for the first time to recreate the ambience of the Russian capital of the early twentieth century as possibly seen by the Bulgarian artists. For want of enough documental ground, occasional memoirs about E. Zvantseva School under Mstislav Dobuzhinsky and Léon Bakst and publications in Russian literary and art Apollon journal are used to give an idea of Sirak Skitnik's presence in that cultural field.

Attention is devoted to his teachers, Léon Bakst, Mstislav Dobuzhinsky and Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin and their influence in terms of their views of art without exaggerating their particular pedagogical role. The principles of Zvantseva School and the guidelines for young artists taught at the school – towards vivid perception of nature, towards developing sensitiveness to colours, forms, lines – are commented more thoroughly for the first time. Piqued interest in children's drawings, folk toys, shop signage, in all 'vulgar' phenomena of art so typical of Russian and European avant-garde is stressed upon.

Special attention is devoted to the issue of Apollon journal and Mir Iskusstva (World of Art) art movement, about which a lot of discrepancies and errors occur in the available sources. Instead of literally tying Sirak Skitnik down to those, the idea of the cultural context these have created and its general effect on the Bulgarian painter is proposed.

Information of the bustling artistic life in that period and especially, in the then Russian capital, St Petersburg is given; of the exhibitions mounted by various avant-garde movements as well as of the pres-

ence of French and European modernism there.

The article develops the idea of an overall effect on Sirak Skitnik of Russian social and cultural environment rather than of certain stylistic influences. His vocal public position, his active role as a cultural figure, as an art and drama reviewer and head of Bulgarian Radio following his return to Bulgaria are also interpreted in this regard.

SIRAK SKITNIK AS A DIRECTOR AT THE NATIONAL THEATRE

Kamelia Nikolova

Bulgarian painter, poet and art critic Sirak Skitnik has in his rich biography also a professional experience as theatre director. During the season 1923/24, he was a dramaturge and artistic secretary of the National Theatre, where he was invited as a respected and erudite collaborator of "Zlatorog" by the chief editor of the magazine Vladimir Vassilev, who has taken at the same time as manager of the national scene. While Sirak Skitnik held this position he staged "Monna Vanna" by Maurice Maeterlinck.

The invitation to Sirak Skitnik was part of the overall moderate program of the new director for renovation and modernization of the National Theatre. Recognized as a journalist and artist, who knows European avant-garde movements and at the same time he presents them to the Bulgarian audience in a relieved and balanced version, he intended to create the performance in the aesthetics of expressive theatre (known in Bulgaria until then only by radical stage experiments of the expressionist artist Geo Milev).

The premiere of "Monna Vanna" (November 15, 1923) made a strong impression, especially with its visual solution – new and unexpected for Bulgarian scene until then. Sirak Skitnik is a director and also a stage designer of the show. It reveals the conflict in the drama through a specially constructed rhythm of the

space, achieved by clashes of contrasting colors and power lines of the objects as well as by the actors' groupings on stage. In the mise en scene artist uses some strategies of the emblematic theatrical expressionism as the sculptural formed central character – emblem of a certain idea, who is opposed to the collective image of the mass. But expressive strategies are not continued in the acting. Sirak Skitnik tries to combine his expressive concept for the performance with the traditional National Theatre's acting style. This effort turns rather unsuccessful, and the show remains the only experience as stage director of the artist. However the moderate, but bright and original expressive theatre, invented by him was successfully extended and accepted by Hrisant Tsankov - one of the leading directors in Bulgarian theatre between the two world wars of the twentieth century.

SIRAK SKITNIK'S CITY *Bistra Rangellova*

The city, the urban landscape in Sirak Skitnik's oeuvre is a subject matter of a special study for the first time ever. Interest in him is no fluke. Sirak Skitnik is the sole Bulgarian artist, who has consistently developed the motif of the 'modern city' between the two world wars. In the context of his rich and varied landscape performance, 'the city' also emerges as a sub-genre in its own right with its own development and modifications. Still, it is the urban landscapes that raise a number of questions about the dating of the paintings and the unspecified dating makes it difficult to shed light on and interpret some of the major trends in the artist's oeuvre, which necessitates considering the issue of the "city" without disrupting its integrity. An analysis with specifying the dating allows for following the development of the motif and focuses attention on Sirak Skitnik's experiments with structures and forms, setting new, modern and long-term trends in Bulgarian art.

PANAYOT TODOROV'S FIRST TEACHERS IN ART AND HIS THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

*Plamen V. Petrov
Ramona Dimova*

Very often the artistic creativity of Sirak Skitnik is revealed as an inaccessible phenomenon that grows up in bizarre manner within the intellectual circles of St. Petersburg. In the article many new facts have been published for the first time revealing a more logical line of the artist's development. Having received his first lessons in painting by his uncle Georgi Gulmezov in his hometown Sliven, Panayot went to study further at the Samokov School of Theology, where his teacher in art was Nikola Georgiev. Common characteristics of the early artistic attempts of Sirak Skitnik and of his relative, who has been among the first students at the State School of Drawing in Sofia (1896), are given. The authors of the text examine also some interesting moments of the artist's schooldays in Samokov, by publishing a complete list of his classmates. A significant part of the teaching team were traced, whose courses he attended for four years. Those were years in which he went on painting. And though the nephew had travelled far from Georgi Gulmezov, in 1900–1902 the lessons learned from him still show through.

SIRAK'S JOURNEYS THROUGH THEATRE OR DRAMA OR CRITICISM AS DESTINY AND CONVICTION

Svetlana Pancheva

The article treats Sirak Skitnik's fundamental views and ideas as stated in many of his reviews on Bulgarian drama of the 1920s and the 1930s, which in his opinion needed renewal and aestheticization. These were in fact the views of drama modernism, striving to overcome literality and theatrical illusion, the ideas of 'theatricalising theatre', which has to retain its creative nature, its brilliance of a synthetic art, where all arts are harmoniously combined to the sole end of suggesting the 'general tone' of the work. His theoretical works *Man, Set Design and Stage Construction* and *Moscow Art Theatre* as well as the aesthetic issues of drama, staging and the art of acting are examined in

terms of such issues as 'art or imitation' and 'truth to art rather than truth to nature' are considered in detail. The article points out that Sirak Skitnik was among the earliest drama reviewers in Bulgaria, who, led by his brilliant maxim that 'art is first of all a piece of soul and only then, a represented show', clearly and categorically has distinguished art as a reflection from art as an expression and all along his long and intense career of an artist and reviewer has defended the aesthetics of 'creative recreation of reality' and of 'inner expression' as well as that in his career of a drama reviewer he searched for more style and less realism.

SIRAK SKITNIK: NOTES ON HIS TIMELINE

Krasimir Iliev

This article examines the few known or unknown, published and unpublished benchmarks for the development of Sirak Skitnik as an artist. In the course of mounting the exhibition occasioned by the 130th anniversary of Sirak Skitnik and compiling the catalogue, Plamen Petrov and I found a lot of imprecise facts gathered over the years. The plastic manner, paintings in exhibitions, acquisitions, reproductions in the press are the reference points of the study. His work is divided into five periods: prior to St Petersburg, while in St Petersburg, an early period in Bulgaria, the early 1920s and his late works. The dating of *City* (ca. 1909) is grounded, which is a key to the understanding that in his years in St Petersburg Sirak Skitnik painted particular places in particular time not from memory later in Bulgaria. Sirak Skitnik's paintings occurring in available catalogues, in the annuals of the National Museum, the press reviews covering his two solo exhibitions are named.

ON SIRAK SKITNIK'S PALETTE

*Ilinka Chergarova
Petia Penkova*

Sirak Skitnik's significance is undoubted in the pantheon of the Bulgarian cultural greats between the two world wars. An artist and art reviewer, poet and dramatic arts historian, Sirak was remarkable for his views of art, shown in his expressive

manner, expressiveness and great colouristic skills both in painting and literature.

This article is the first ever to focus on technological and restoration aspects of the painter's heritage. Proceeding from a valuable to any great painter item, the palette, both the substances in the paints used by the artist and the time of using the palette (probably in the 1930s) are made clear through a series of tests: photofluorographic examination, X-ray crystal analysis and Laser Induced Breakdown Spectroscopy (LIBS). The article is an interim report of a kind, the follow-up of which along with using laser-induced fluorescence spectroscopy (LIF), would allow for precisely fixing the content of the pigments as well as for establishing the exact number of paints both found on the palette and in some of Sirak Skitnik's paintings so that to contribute to a more accurate dating of his works.

SIRAK SKITNIK AND THE ART CRITICISM OF THE FIRST FIVE-YEAR PLAN (1949–1953)

Galina Dekova

The article gives to an extent the parameters within which the name of Sirak Skitnik has been widely used and relevant in the earliest years of the People's Republic of Bulgaria in relation to the so-called five-year plan. The interest in such a marginal, both to Sirak Skitnik and the reviewers, issue is stirred up by the assumption that in that period 'socialist realism' has been formulated as a 'negative' to Bulgarian modernism of the preceding period. This process, on the one hand, was triggered by purely opportunistic requirements and was related to the establishing of arts as a functional link of the machinery of government, which has been a conceptually new phenomenon in Bulgarian culture. The process, on the other hand, necessarily operates with inherited values and criteria. Criticism received by Sirak Skitnik is only one among many manifestations of the historic 'third generation', of whom much later many of their representatives would speak as of treading the line of the 'third way'. The 'third way' is suggestive of an attempt to survive physically in conditions unimaginable to contemporary gen-

erations, a fact that makes difficult any attempt to evaluate the events in terms of their moral values. So, the article just broaches the methods of historization, of dealing with the recent past and placing it in the new ideological scheme of a strong and united society that knows where they are heading for.

SIRAK SKITNIK'S SUNKEN CATHEDRAL *Yanko Marinov*

Sirak Skitnik has been interested in music all along his life rather than only in his later years and administrative activities. Music is present in one way or the other in his work as a painter as well. The painting *The Sunken Cathedral*, titled after Claude Debussy's *Préludes – Book 1: No. 10, La cathédrale engloutie* is especially inspiring to a musician or music theoretician. Willing to find out if the representation had recreates 'at random or freely' the 'story' of the prelude, we'd find that the painter not only expressed the imagery of the piece but also placed it in the context of the ancient legend of the Island of Ys through complex symbols and selection of colours. While the composer gives the outcome, the denouement of the tragic myth in tones, the painter has represented also the events that have caused the 'submergence of the cathedral'. Looking at the images in other paintings by Sirak Skitnik one realizes the necessity to apply such 'hermeneutics' to these too so that to understand the language they are speaking to get their message across.

PANAYOT TODOROV: MUSIC CREATOR ON RADIO *Stanislava Georgiava*

In 1935, Panayot Tododrov headed Radio Sofia and succeeded in establishing a elite, progressive, respected and demanded cultural institution in this country, comparable in terms of its achievements with established European radio broad-

casters. In his varied activities of a painter, reviewer, poet and theatre theoretician, P. Todorov did not shy away from music either, sharing and backing the ideas of the Radio's first manager, composer and pianist Dimiter Nenov. Music programmes included more often than not national premieres of Bulgarian and foreign pieces and had the biggest share compared with the rest of the themed programmes. Broadcasting folk music was also a progressive idea. Radio Sofia established international relations and cooperation with other broadcasters mostly in the field of music exchange. Regardless of the insufficiently developed technical equipment, there were broadcasts live from abroad. The uplift achieved by P. Todorov was due to a rarely occurring combination of the professional skills of an artist and sustained inner striving to cover all the bases, to fascinate people, to influence and reshape the entire society through radio programmes.

THE MEMORY OF SIRAK SKITNIK IN BULGARIAN ARCHIVES *Boyka Dzipalska* *Plamen V. Petrov*

The article is an attempt to name all major archival sources, in which primary documents and the artistic heritage of Panayot Todorov better known as Sirak Skitnik are stored. Arranged by volume, this is an array of documents at the National Gallery of Bulgarian Art, at the Archives State Agency and the collection in the scientific auxiliary fund at Dimitar Dobrovich Art Gallery, Sliven, the artist's hometown. In these peculiar repositories of memory, most of which are still insufficiently researched, a considerable epistolary heritage is found along with some rare, unknown to the research community art developments not just regarding the descendant from Sliven, but also his friends and associates in work, such as Boris Denev and Vasil Stoilov among others. The article cites also unknown poems by Sirak

Skitnik, written in Russian and possibly published in *Veles literary almanac*.

The named sources reveal an important line of studying the life story of this 'space eater', which is a really challenging task, waiting to be fulfilled. Only then his heritage of drawings, paintings, poetry, fiction, criticism could be understood in essence, could come alive and allow for proceeding with it, but not through affect or delicate feelings, not through the imprecise at times instruments of art historians, but through the most important of all tools, learning.