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Sculpture in Modern Environment: Educational Technology

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***Abstract*: The article looks at the issues connected with art education aimed at training professional sculptors and qualified spectators. It outlines the main problems of sculptural thinking in the Russian mentality. The current situation is described in terms of shifting paradigms related to filling the everyday environment of Russian cities with sculptural objects. The article provides results of the research into preferences of population groups most knowledgeable about art, such as experts in art education, teachers and professional sculptors. A stable tradition of visual thinking rather than using tactile imagery has been identified, as well as preferences for the realistic paradigm of art and academic traditions at all stages of sculptors' training. At the same time, the article shows positive changes in the social demand towards small-scale sculpture that is actively present in the living environment of a modern person. The main problems of sculptor training at different levels of education are indicated. The author suggests a new model of teaching sculpture based on the actualization of mythological traditions in the cultural paradigm of postmodernism.**

***Index Terms*: art education in Russia, mythological structures in sculpture, sculptural thinking, sculpture, symbolism of shapes in sculpture, visual and tactile thinking.**

I. INTRODUCTION

Recently, the situation regarding the penetration of sculpture into the living environment of the Russian cities has started changing for the better. The lengthy period in the history of the Russian sculpture characterized by the overall predominance of the memorial and monumental sculptures had finished by the end of the 20th century. This period included the following stages: monumental propaganda proposed by V.I. Lenin (the 1920s); colossal sculptural ensembles of the Stalin's Empire style (the 1920–1930s); memorials dedicated to the events of the Great Patriotic War (the 1960–1980s). Starting from the 2000s, areas designated specifically for everyday recreation with corresponding aesthetic elements, such as small sculptures, have started to develop. In her thesis "The Stroganov school of sculpture in the context of historical and art space in Russia in the 20th and 21st centuries" Yu.A. Smolenkova mentions A.N. Burganov, G.V. Frangulyan and A.N. Kovalchuk as artists who were the first in the Russian and Soviet practice to take a step towards the audience. They used a low pedestal "virtually integrating the historical and art space of characters and physical space of the spectators" [1]. Such sculptures as "Alexander Pushkin and Natalia Goncharova" (A.N. Burganov, Moscow), the monument to B.Sh. Okudzhava (G.V. Frangulyan, Moscow) and the monument to L.N. Gumilev (A.N. Kovalchuk, Bezhetsk) became innovative in this respect. The changes involved not only the formal attributes but also the subject matter of sculpture. Over the first decade of the 21st century sculptures connected with the local common folklore traditions: "Chizhik-Pyzhik" (St. Petersburg, sculptor: R. Gabridze, architect: V. Bukhaev), "Permyak – The Salty Ears" (Perm, R. Ismagilov), "Legend of the Perm Bear" (Perm, Vl. Pavlenko), "The Lefty Who Horseshoed a Flea" (Chelyabinsk, I. Brunetkin) appeared in the streets of Russian cities. Some sculptures refer to the historical memory of daily life: The Monument to a Firefighter (Vladimir), "The Painter" (Chelyabinsk, M. Salamasov). Works devoted to everyday life topics have also become popular: "The First Teacher" (Chelyabinsk, A. Sharikova), "The Veteran" (Chelyabinsk, M. Salamasov), "The Monument to Happiness "I'll Sing Right Now" (Tomsk, J. Zavyalova).

All the above-mentioned monuments are within easy reach of spectators, are popular as lucky charms and have been designed for interaction with the audience. Their close arrangement in the recreation area creates an environment full of sculptures and their accessibility allows restoring the tactile contact between the spectator and sculptural objects for the first time in many centuries. However, the mass character of small sculptures resulted in a decline in their quality. In the expert review of the quality of sculpture that we conducted, the main part belongs to the opinion of A.I. Rukavishnikov. One of the leading Russian sculptors believes that "the monuments being erected nowadays in Russia, in fact, represent staffage, since they look like monuments, but are not charged emotionally, even more so — sculpturally" (materials of an interview conducted by E.S. Medkova). Summarizing the above-mentioned, it seems possible to say that there are several reasons for this situation:

– historically developed weak tradition of sculptural thinking in the Russian culture and low popularity of this art type;

– absence of spaces in Russia that are filled with sculptural objects to the degree of automatic crystallization of motor-tactile perception of the surrounding world;

– low level of aesthetic and cultural competence of the Russian audience that manifests itself in extreme conservatism of spectators and customers who want to see only realistic images, or paradoxical association of sculpture exceptionally with gravestones (for example, when A.I. Rukavishnikov suggests doing a sculptural portrait, the customer may refuse saying that "it is too early for me");

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– problems with art education at all levels, from general education schools and supplementary education to training of professional sculptors at higher education institutions.

The field of the research. The indicated problems determined the field and scope of our research:

– the problems of sculptural thinking and the existence of sculpture at the level of public consciousness of the Russian audience;

– the issues connected with the development of modern aesthetic approaches to sculpture as a type of art;

– the specific features of organization and structure of art education in the sphere of sculpture.

Therefore, *the objective of our research* is to determine the way and strategies of solving the problem of the development of sculptural vision of the world in continuous art education in Russia. In order to reach these aims, the following tasks must be accomplished:

to study the specific features and possible structural shifts in the ideas of modern expert sculptors and art educators about the sculptural vision of the world at the current stage of development of the Russian culture;

to study the specific structural features of the system of art education in Russia existing in the sphere of development of sculptural thinking at the level of spectators and professionals;

to analyze sculpture curricula at different levels of art education;

to identify the main problems of Russian art education in the sphere of sculpture and suggest corresponding solutions at different education levels.

II. METHODS

A. General description

In accordance with the objective and aims of the research, quantitative (surveys) and qualitative (expert interview, analysis of the structure of art education in Russia, analysis of textbooks and programs) research methods were used.

Expert interviews about the quality of sculptor training were conducted with representatives of the professional sculptural community of Russia: both famous sculptors (A.I. Rukavishnikov) and graduates from Moscow State Academic Art Institute named after V.I. Surikov, the Russian Academy of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture named after I.S. Glazunov, Moscow State Academy of Industrial and Applied Arts named after S.G. Stroganov, who are starting their career in art (expert sculptors — ES).

The survey was conducted among researchers (art education experts — AEE) specializing in the problems of art education in Russia (Institute of Art Education and Cultural Studies of the Russian Academy of Education) and practicing teachers (PT) working in general education and children's art schools in Moscow, Vladimir, Chelyabinsk, Tomsk and Novosibirsk.

The research continued from the middle of 2016 to the beginning of 2018 according to the plan outlined above. The total number of research participants over 2016–2018 amounted to 1,020 people from five Russian cities.

B. Block diagram

Survey results. When asked the question concerning the type of thinking prevailing in the Russian mentality and art (visual or tactile), the respondents gave the following answers:

Table I.

	AEE	PT	ES
visual	93.75%	92%	60%
tactile	6.25%	8%	40%

Answers to the question about the share of sculpture in Russian art were not so unanimous.

Table II.

	AEE	PT	ES
high	18.75%	16.(6)%	40%
medium	43.75%	66.(6)5%	60%
low	37.5%	16.(6)%	0%

The question about ranking the types of art in order of their significance for the Russian culture (from the 1st to the 5th place) allowed us not only to identify the importance of sculpture but also to reveal the current national ideas about the structural correlation between the degrees of significance attributed to different types of art.

Table III.

	AEE	PT	ES
painting	Places 1–2 (81%)	Places 1–3 (50%)	Places 1–3 (100%)
graphic art	Places 4–5 (87.5%)	Places 4–5 (67%)	Places 4–5 (100%)
architecture	Places 1–2 (69%)	Places 1–2 (58%)	Places 1–3 (60%)
sculpture	Places 4–5 (62%)	Places 4–5 (67%)	Places 4–5 (80%)
decorative and applied arts	Places 3–4 (50%)	Places 2–3 (58%)	Place 1 (80%)

Preferences in the sphere of sculpture are as follows.

Table IV.

	AEE	PT	ES
small-scale sculpture	64.7%	50%	20%
monumental and decorative sculpture	35.3%	66.(6)%	60%
monumental sculpture	17.6%	16.(6)%	20%
indoor sculpture	11.7%	25%	60%

The question about the preferences for the figurative (realistic) or non-figurative (abstractionist) paradigm gives an idea of the orientation of the current sculptural trends.

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Table V.

	AEE	PT	ES
realistic trend	76.4%	91.(6)%	40%
abstract trend	47%	16.(6)%	60%

The answers in the following table give an idea of the areas of contact between spectators and sculptural artifacts (the respondents were suggested a choice between several options).

Table VI.

	AEE	PT	ES
in the street	93.75%	83.(3)%	100%
in a museum	100%	66.(6)%	80%
at an exhibition	56.25%	66.(6)%	80%
in the mass media	0%	8.(3)%	40%
on the Internet	31.25%	50%	60%

The answers in the two following tables, VII and VIII, testify to the satisfaction of the respondents with the density of sculptural works in their living environment. The first question asks for the evaluation of the density of sculptural artifacts in the respondent's town or city.

Table VII.

	AEE	PT	ES
high	75%	16.(6)%	60%
medium	18.75%	58.(3)%	20%
low	6.25%	25%	20%
absent	0%	0%	0%

The second question directly addresses the wish of the respondents to increase the density of sculptural objects in their everyday life and cultural surroundings.

Table VIII.

	AEE	PT	ES
yes	35.2%	66.(6)%	80%
no	17.6%	0%	0%
the current level is satisfactory	47%	33.(3)%	20%

The following two tables, IX and X, address the outlook for sculpture. Table IX presents the answers given by the respondents to the question if there are prospects for the future development of sculpture as a type of art in general.

Table IX.

	AEE	PT	ES
yes	88.2%	66.(6)%	100%
no	0%	8.(3)%	
I don't know	11.76%	25%	

Table X specifies which kinds of sculpture, according to the respondents, have the best future prospects.

Table X.

	AEE	PT	ES
small-scale sculpture	29.4%	75%	0%
monumental and decorative sculpture	64.7%	25%	60%
monumental sculpture	17.6%	16.6%	0%
indoor sculpture	5.8%	8.(3)%	40%

Answers given by AEE and PT give a very approximate idea of how widespread classes in various kinds of sculpture are and what are the wishes of the current generation of adults in this sphere of art practices projected on the generation of children. Table XI shows the percentage of the respondents who used to do molding in the past, are teaching sculpture now or never attended molding classes.

Table XI.

	AEE	PT
yes	52.9%	58.8%
no	66.6%	33.(3)%
are teaching sculpture at present	17.6%	16.(6)%

Table XII presents answers about the wish of the respondents to take up any kind of molding.

Table XII.

	AEE	PT
yes	58.8%	58.(3)%
no	41.1%	41.(6)%

The following table reflects the respondents' preferences in sculptural materials (it was possible to choose several options).

Table XIII.

	AEE	PT
clay	47%	41.6%
plasticine	0%	8.3%
sculptural plasticine	11.7%	8.3%
chamotte	5.8%	8.3%
wood	5.8%	25%
sculptural dough	11.7%	16.6%
metal	15.8%	8.3%
plastic	0%	16.6%

The following table shows the answers given by the respondents to the question if they would like their children or grandchildren to take up molding and which forms of education they think are suitable for the younger generation.

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Table XIV.

	AEE	PT
Molding classes within extracurricular activities at school	65%	52.9%
Molding clubs	43.(3)%	29.4%
Molding classes at art schools	25%	17.6%
Respondents do not want their children to take up molding	0%	17.6%

Expert interviews about the quality of sculptor training. Table XV presents data on quality evaluation of sculpture education provided to graduates of Moscow State Academic Art Institute named after V.I. Surikov, the Russian Academy of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture named after I.S. Glazunov, and Moscow State Academy of Industrial and Applied Arts named after S.G. Stroganov.

Table XV.

Higher professional education	33.(3)% high	33.(3)% norma
Specialized schools	50% great	50% good
Supplementary education		25% sufficient
General education schools		

Table XVI shows the answers to the question about the prevailing teaching paradigm at higher professional education institutions that focus on sculptor training.

Table XVI.

academism	75%
realism	25%
avant-garde	0%

III. RESULTS

Results of the *survey* allowed us to identify the place of sculpture in modern Russian society. It can be stated that the visual type of thinking still prevails in the Russian mentality (93.75% — AEE, 92% — PT, 60% — ES). The role of sculpture in Russian art is evaluated as of medium importance (from 43.76% according to AEE to 66.6% according to PT). However, the breakdown of preferences for particular types of art shows a lower position of sculpture. According to the information provided by the respondents, the first place still belongs to painting — it has been ranked the first or the second by most respondents: from 55% of PT to 100% of ES. It is followed by architecture: it has been ranked the first or the second by up to 60% of respondents from each group. Decorative and applied arts are in the third place: they are ranked the second-the third or the third-the fourth by the majority of respondents: from 62% of AEE to 80% of ES. Sculpture shares the fourth and fifth place with graphic art.

The question about preferences for particular types of sculpture testifies to redistribution of interest in applied types of sculpture that are becoming a part of the everyday environment — small-scale sculpture (64.7% of AEE and 50% of PT) and monumental and decorative sculpture (66.6% of PT and 60% of ES).

In terms of artistic style, the realistic paradigm still prevails among art consumers (up to 91% of PT and 76.5 of AEE). However, a shift towards an increasing role of abstract imagery has been spotted among professional sculptors (up to 60%).

The next group of questions reflects the relationship between the environment and the audience. The answers about the area of contact with sculptural artifacts show that sculpture has penetrated the living environment of the Russian cities — the answers about establishing contact with sculptures in the street have become as frequent as the answers about encounters with sculptures in museums and exhibitions. The Internet has shown significant growth as a source of information, while the role of mass media has diminished. The opinions about the density of sculpture in the living environment expressed by the respondents indicate different levels and dynamics of introducing sculpture into urban areas. The respondents from the AEE group represented Moscow and reported a high degree of sculptural density in the Russian capital (up to 75%). The respondents from the PT group were mainly representatives of Russian regions, where the level of sculptural density was reported to be medium (58%). Therefore, it is logical that the respondents from regions expressed their wish to increase the sculptural density of their living environment (66%). Naturally, the corresponding figures based on the answers given by professional sculptors turned out to be higher — up to 80% of sculptors would like to increase the density of sculptural artifacts in their living environment.

High expectations of the respondents regarding sculpture development prospects prove the positive social demand in this sphere: 100% of ES, 88% of AEE and 66.(6)% of PT. The priority is again given to applied types of sculpture: 75% of PT vote for small-scale sculpture, while 64% of AEE and 60% of ES believe in a bright future for monumental and decorative sculpture.

The active interaction with sculpture and its future development prospects are reflected in the answers to the questions about taking part in molding classes, the desire to master new techniques and introduce the younger generation to new working styles. At the same time, it is important to take into account the fact that the respondents were people advanced in this respect. Even taking this into consideration, it should be noted that negative answers are predominant (66% of AEE have never taken up molding), while positive answers about classes indicate the respondents' poor memory of their school classes. Up to half of the respondents would like to take up sculpture as their hobby in their free time, which suggests a high percentage of missed opportunities. It is noteworthy that the percentage of sculptors among PT is low (16%). The place of sculpture in the life of the younger generation is determined as a sphere of supplementary education (extracurricular activities at school account on average for 50% and out-of-school clubs — for up to 30%). Specialization of the younger generation at the level of art schools is important on average for 20% of the respondents.

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Clay has come to the fore as the preferred material followed by sculptural dough and professional sculptural plasticine, while metal became the third most popular material. The respondents' memories of ordinary plasticine, which was widely used in school classes, are probably negative. Up to 16% of PT would like to learn how to work with a new type of material — plastic. All these answers indicate that the respondents prefer professional materials and clay, which is the most pliable material in terms of molding. It takes quite a long time to get acquainted with non-conventional materials.

Expert interviews about the quality of sculptor training. Graduates of higher education institutions evaluate education in the sphere of sculpture as downward-deteriorating. Higher professional education has received a high rating (up to 66% of the respondents reported its high and satisfactory level) as well as specialized secondary education represented by specialized schools (50% — excellent, 50% — good). 75% of the respondents rated supplementary education represented by ordinary art schools and clubs as "three" on a five-point scale. Classes at general education schools are rated by 100% of respondents as unsatisfactory, having received two points on a five-point scale. The predominant paradigm in higher professional education is academism (75%). The remaining 25% account for the realistic trend. According to the respondents, the avant-garde tradition is missing.

When asked about the examples to follow given to art students by their teachers, 100% of the respondents spoke about antique and classical works of art.

The open-ended question about the respondents' suggestions for improvement of education in the sphere of sculpture produced the following results:

60% of the respondents found it necessary to focus on the level of art education at general education schools — improve the quality of teaching and increase the classroom hours devoted to art classes.

40% of the respondents mentioned the necessity to improve higher professional education of sculptors and their postgraduate training. In the first case, the issue that came up was a reorientation of education towards the 20th–21st centuries' standards came up. In the second case, the respondents outlined the drawbacks in the postgraduate training of sculptors and mentioned the lack of modern modular organization of postgraduate training with an international component, such as Moscow Architecture School "MARSH" [2].

The most detailed answers about the problems of higher professional education in the sphere of sculpture were provided by A.I. Rukavishnikov, a member of the Russian Academy of Arts and Professor at Moscow State Academic Art Institute named after V.I. Surikov. First of all, he highlighted the absence of a thought-out system of initial engagement of all people who would like to take up sculpture, identification and selection of talented children and teenagers. Second, he mentioned poor facilities at all levels of education in this sphere, while training of a future sculptor requires many resources. As far as methodological issues are concerned, he pointed out the problem of a narrow scope of classic examples that are used to develop the vision of future sculptors. Therefore, A.I. Rukavishnikov believes that it is important to widen the historical basis of sculpture and include the sculpture of non-classical cultures into the educational process, such as the sculpture of Mesoamerica, the Far East, Mesopotamia, Ancient Egypt, African primitive sculpture, the plastic art of Neolithic cultures, Russian paganism, etc. According to A.I. Rukavishnikov, one of the weaknesses of the teaching methodology is the lack of unity between different components of the educational process, particularly between drawing and sculpture. In his opinion, it is necessary to draw and sculpt an object at the same time, comparing the imagery between works that were created with the help of different techniques. He thinks that the method of transferring shapes into different modes of plastic art encourages the development of flexible sculptural thinking and creates the vision of the world as an arena of plastic metamorphoses. A.I. Rukavishnikov believes that in the current context the academic understanding of composition as an arrangement of figures is outdated. To him, the thing of primary importance in sculptor training is an arrangement of geometric figures looking that allows students to explore the abstract topics of balance, symmetry/asymmetry, etc. Therefore, he believes that training should be based on the swing principle: moving from sculptures of living beings to abstract arrangements and back. Not only does it encourage the mutual enrichment of the classic and modern visions of plastic art, but also promotes the improvement of the skills by future sculptors and their preparation for any challenges of the current life. A.I. Rukavishnikov thinks that a significant point in the process of creating a sculpture is the preliminary feeling of a particular shape in space. According to him, it is necessary to protect and support this shape that precedes a sculpture "with space holder, entwine it with "bark" (materials of an interview conducted by E. Medkova).

Analysis of the *specific structural features of the system of art education* in Russia existing in the sphere of development of sculptural thinking has produced the following results. The situation regarding sculpture classes in general education schools is the most disastrous. Analysis of training programs and learning kits existing in the Russian educational space, including those compiled by such authors as B.M. Nemenskii, T.I. Koptseva, E. Koroteeva, I.E. Kashekova, L.G. Savenkova, E. Ermolinskaya and E.S. Medkova has shown that molding classes are limited by the first three grades of elementary school and mainly involve working with plasticine. Out of the total number of class hours, only 3–4% of them account for molding annually. The tasks are only of applied nature: children have to mold a pet, an animal, fairy tale characters or copy examples of folk crafts. Later on, even when it comes to analysis and discussions of artworks, examples from sculpture are reviewed last and are limited by a classic set of examples, almost totally excluding the sculpture of the 20th century. Analysis of supplementary education programs used in children's art schools has shown that in a number of such schools, there are no sculpture classes at all. Besides, there is a trend toward the substitution of the term "sculpture" with the term "molding", which reduces the level of understanding of the subject in general.

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Due to the insufficient material and technical base, the administration of such schools prefers to introduce such courses as “Decorative and applied arts”, “Ceramics” and “Folk crafts” that involve the creation of decorative objects, souvenirs, vessels and folk toys. Class hours are not distributed in favor of sculpture either. This situation can be illustrated with the data provided by the Krasnoyarsk Children’s Art School No. 2 [3], according to which, there are 102 hours of drawing and painting each in grades 1–4, while only 68 hours are allocated for sculpture. Besides, while the number of drawing hours is increased by the fourth grade (3,3,4,4), the number of sculpture hours gets reduced (2,2,1,1). Comparison between the numbers of contests conducted at different levels is not in the favor sculpture as well. There are dozens of children’s creativity competitions in painting and drawing at different levels, including international ones, while we have found only two indoor sculpture competitions. The first of them took place in 2014 at the premises of the Children’s Art School in Sysert. The second contest, Moscow Regional Competition in Academic Sculpture, was organized in 2017 by Moscow Academic Art Lyceum of the Russian Academy of Arts [4]. Tellingly, ten out of the 63 competitions planned in the Moscow region are connected with painting (16%) and only one — with sculpture (1.6%) [5]. The next level of sculpture education is represented by specialized art schools: Moscow Academic Art Lyceum of the Russian Academy of Arts [6] and St. Petersburg State Academic Art Lyceum named after B.V. Ioganson of the Russian Academy of Arts [7] that have full-fledged sculpture departments. Children starting from 10–12 years old are selected for these schools and encouraged to continue their sculpture education at higher education institutions. Their curriculums are directly related to those used at the institutes they are associated with — Moscow State Academic Art Institute named after V.I. Surikov and St. Petersburg State Academy Institute of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture named after I.E. Repin of the Russian Academy of Arts and are of purely academic nature. Another specific feature of these schools is that there are only two of them in Russia, and the admissions are very limited. The large-scale foundation of higher art education is represented by departments of art and graphic design at pedagogical universities, which train future schoolteachers. Analysis of curriculums implemented by such departments, which can be illustrated by the Institute of Arts at Moscow State Pedagogical University, shows that sculpture departments are missing at these educational institutions and “molding” is taught as a supplementary subject rather than a separate study program [8]. Professional sculptors are trained at five specialized higher education institutions in Moscow and St. Petersburg: Moscow State Academic Art Institute named after V.I. Surikov [9], Russian Academy of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture named after I.S. Glazunov [10], St. Petersburg State Academy Institute of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture named after I.E. Repin of the Russian Academy of Arts [11], Moscow State Academy of Industrial and Applied Arts named after S.G. Stgoranov [12] and St. Petersburg State Academy of Art and Design named after A.L. Stieglitz [13]. The full scope of all types and genres of sculpture (monumental sculpture, monumental and decorative sculpture, indoor sculpture — portrait and composition, small-scale sculpture, relief, medallic art, restoration) is taught in the first two institutions. The last three institutions focus on applied types of sculpture and consist only of one department “Monumental and decorative art (sculpture)”. Analysis of study programs shows commitment to academic style in all of the above-mentioned institutions. Stroganov Academy is an exception, which is largely explained by the fact that it has had experience of the VKHUTEMAS (Higher Art and Technical Studios). In 1920, the VKHUTEMAS developed a propaedeutic course “Volume” based on avant-garde principles (A. Lavinskii, B. Korolev, A. Babichev) about the most general abstract techniques of molding in sculpture. This course is still a part of the curriculum implemented at Stroganov Academy.

Against the background of complete dominance of the academic paradigm, the initiative suggested by A.I. Rukavishikov seems interesting: he came up with an idea to invite young sculptors interested in postgraduate training to do a “research-oriented experimental” course based on the art space “Rukav” and his own workshop in Arbat. A.I. Rukavishnikov describes the main idea of his experiment in the following way: “Looking back on the depth of ages, we often notice that lack of perspective skills, knowledge of human and animal anatomy, fundamentals of academic drawing, painting and sculpture has often resulted in unpredictable and emotional works that make a stronger impression than “correct” art. Such examples are numerous: Old Russian sculpture in the Kama region, Ancient Syrian sculpture, the art of modern Innuits, works by artists of the 20th century — Filonov, Sitnikov, Pirosmani, Nesterova, naïve art of the Soviet epoch... We would like to try something like this within this course, which is somewhat risky” [14]. Unfortunately, this course is the only project in Russia dealing with postgraduate training in sculpture.

IV. DISCUSSION

The general conclusion that can be drawn from this research is that there are certain positive shifts concerning the social demand for introduction of sculptural works into the living environment of Russian cities. At the same time, it should be admitted that both the mentality (predominance of visual perception, lack of plastic skills among the general population) and education (drawbacks of art education at the primary mass level, the conservativeness of educational paradigms used in secondary and higher education) are falling behind the needs of current age. The problems connected with the structure and material support of art education require shifts at the administrative level and lie beyond our power. However, the questions related to teaching content and methodology, especially in the light of the identified wishes existing in the expert community, can be addressed by reviewing the basic approaches to understanding sculpture. In this respect, it is possible to suggest a new model of considering all aspects of sculpture, including its material, color, shape, structure, correlation between a sculpture, its surroundings and other types of art.

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In the course of development of the new model we took it as a premise that the 20th century was the time of cardinal changes of figurative spatiotemporal paradigms, which was stated by U. Eco, M. German, E. Andreeva, L. Chertov, A. Pelipenko [15]-[19]. According to S. Khan-Magomedov, at such moments "the focus on the symbolic role of the form and artistic image quickly becomes much more pronounced. Everything seems to start anew — without having received general artistic recognition, the shapes and images are kind of reaching out to the initial meaning of form and its symbolism in their fight with stereotypes" [20]. As the VKHUTEMAS experience has shown, the first steps in this direction were made in the 1920s — the initial symbolism of geometric shapes was objectified from the perspective of the revolutionary ideology of avant-garde. Now, new reasons have emerged to tap into the initial symbolism of shapes. Relying on the definition of postmodernism as a paradigm suggesting free usage of any cultural legacy (J. Baudrillard, D. Gartman, J. Lyotard, K. Hart, D. Eimert, U. Eco, E. Andreeva, I. Ilin, M. Mozheiko) [15], [17], [21]-[27] and restoration of the mythological tradition (R. Barthes, M. Eliade, A. Pelipenko [28]-[32], we believe that it is reasonable to review the problem of shape, which is essential for architecture, based on the fundamental mythological principles. Shape creates the most generalized archetypal level of the sculptural message, embeds the image in the context of artistic culture, determines the rules of producing new meanings by combination, buildup and transformation of basic configurations, and manages its perception by exerting an influence on the corresponding psychic structures. The basis for identification of fundamental archetypal forms in sculpture is its inherent connection with myths about creation and structuring of the world and, correspondingly, mythological ideas of the sacral shapes involved, which are based on basic geometric symbols — the circle, the square, the triangle, and the cross (the swastika). V.N. Toporov gave an exhaustive description of the functions of basic geometric shapes. He believed that "the relative simplicity of geometric symbols provided stability and accuracy of modeling of mythopoetic objects with their help. The geometric "code" connected with idealization and unification of real objects served as a convenient means of classification; in particular, it was used for developing multipurpose patterns that highlighted the unity of various spheres of reality (compare the opposition between the circle and the square). Geometric symbols describe the structure of cosmos in its vertical and horizontal aspects (as opposed to unstructured chaos, which is never described using geometric symbols), as well as in the spatial and temporal respect. They portray ever-more-consolidated images of cosmos, such as our planet, country, city, settlement, palace, temple, tomb, the social structure of communities (in particular, from the perspective of marital and kin relationships), ethical "space" (compare geometric symbols that illustrate such concepts as faith, love, hope, endurance, loyalty, justice, truth, order, law, etc.)" [21, p. 272]. To specify the process of emergence and development of shapes in sculpture, their semantic and symbolic content, we single out the myths about the creation of the world in the womb of Mother Goddess and its further structuring. Based on these myths, three stages of the gradual introduction of fundamental symbolic shapes into sculpture can be identified: the pre-being period, the period of establishment of being and the period of established being. The first stage is associated with the concept of Chaos as maternal substance giving birth to cosmos (the abyss of the matter core) and chaos as non-existence (the horizontal). The second stage is connected with a female figure — the cosmic figure of Mother Goddess, who establishes the main principles of the existence energetics (the diamond-spindle, the swastika/spiral), with figurative symbolics of her genital organs, the womb and the fetus (the ring/yoni, the sphere), the process of birth (the cube) and development of the universe (the pyramid). The third stage is associated with a male figure symbolized by linga of the world cosmic vertical. This approach is very productive for all levels of education where students explore the imagery of sculpture.

Due to specific figurativeness of myths and their ability to convey complex philosophical concepts through simple stories and vivid objective imagery, relying on the mythological structures of art in general and sculpture, in particular, allows to solve a lot of subjective problems connected with engaging children in plastic art, especially when it comes to understanding abstract symbols hidden in the sculptural imagery. Mythological ideas of the energy of the initial creation can be used to broaden the knowledge about the content of sculptural imagery due to the natural demiurgic activity expressed in both natural protosculptural objects and in the stone, clay, bronze, wood and other materials employed by sculptors. Thus, the demiurgeous activity of a sculptor and motor activity of a spectator, which are secondary in respect to natural forces, get involved in a more complex experience of perceiving the imagery of sculpture. Cosmogonic myths about creation and structuring of the mythological cosmos expand the ideas of figurativeness inherent in various materials, the role of color and shape in sculpture.

The ratio between chaos and cosmos, space and matter, which is significant in the myths about initial creation, give students a visual and practical idea of the fundamentals of form-making and choice of the ways to create shapes (plastic art/molding or sculpture/carving) in sculpture typical of different types of cultures, ethnic groups and epochs.

Myths about the birth of gods, heroes and people clarify the question of the logic behind the choice of material when creating a sculpture depending on the depicted object. The mythological symbolism of colors used in sculpture allows viewing it as text that tells a story about the structure of the mythological model of the universe, its tectonics and the natural lifecycle of life/death/resurrection.

Studying the basic geometric and stereometric symbolic codes/shapes, such as the horizontal, the vertical, the sphere, the cube and the prism, promote the development of integral metaphorically rich ideas of the symbolic meanings of sculptural shapes and the ways of their perception.

Considering sculpture in the light of the role it used to play in ancient rituals that entailed active interaction with protosculptural and sculptural objects lifts the ban on tactile contact with works of plastic art.

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Usage of mythological content allows expanding the students' ideas of sculpture due to the inclusion of the following topics into the curriculum:

protosculptural natural objects, mountains, unusual rock formations, unique stones that played an important role in the development of mythology and culture;

artifacts of the plastic art created by ancient cultures that broaden the knowledge about the usage of color in sculpture, variety of materials, possibility to incorporate sculptures into ensembles that are different from the European ones;

block of modern experimental art that allows to experiment actively with shape and antishape, explore the plastic not only of the matter but also of empty space, address the issues of incorporation of movement and temporal flow into sculpture.

The process of acquiring the skill of thinking through shapes conducted with the help of mythological structures can be easily combined with the engagement of students of all ages in the matrices of national form making.

V. CONCLUSION

Introduction of the suggested model of interpretation of the imagery, semantics and symbolism of the plastic art is in line with the ideas related to the necessity of structural shifts in art and plastic education at all levels expressed by the professional community — in the first place, by sculptors and teachers.

If this model is implemented, at the most large-scale level of education represented by general education schools and supplementary education it will be possible to achieve the following goals:

establishing a direct connection between a child's life experience related to learning about nature and their activity as a creator of three-dimensional objects; let them see through the simplest example that everything that surrounds them — both macrocosm and microcosm — represents an arena where shapes play plastic games;

restoring the tactile contact and techniques of communication with objects of plastic art;

bringing sculpture closer to the children's world through the simple language of myths.

As far as secondary and higher professional sculpture education is concerned, the following problems can be solved:

moving away from the academic educational paradigm and the dogmas associated with classical examples;

revival of the lessons taught by avant-garde about abstract plastic laws and moving further in this direction relying on the game principles typical of postmodern discourse;

overcoming the boundaries between sculptures of living beings and abstract arrangements guided by the symbolism of shape, material and color in sculpture;

accomplishing the shift towards the experimental learning paradigm as a result of expanding the sculptural imagery based on the perception of the world as an arena of plastic metamorphoses and development of flexible sculptural thinking through transferring shapes into different modes of plastic art (architectural sculpture, sculptural architecture, etc.);

overcoming Eurocentrism dictated by classical examples of sculpture and shifting towards the principle of multiculturalism as the basis of modern plastic art;

introduction of non-classical cultures into the intellectual thesaurus of students as a possible source of innovative solutions.

The theoretical model of the possible ways of development of education in the sphere of plastic art has been implemented through the following channels: a system of all-Russian webinars conducted by the publishing house Ventana-Graf and, later, the corporation "Rossiiskii uchebnik"; research and practice webinars organized by the Institute of Art Education and Cultural Studies of the Russian Academy of Education; the department of advanced training courses of the Moscow Academic Art Lyceum of the Russian Academy of Arts named after V.I. Surikov.

All of the above-mentioned components are essential for the improvement of the quality of art education.

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