



PROFESSIONAL TEXTILE ART IN BELARUS IN THE BEGINNING OF XXI CENTURY

KHRYSTSINA VYSOTSKAYA

Belarusian State Academy of Arts | khristinavproject@gmail.com

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Resumen

Este artículo informa sobre la etapa actual del desarrollo de textil artístico profesional en Bielorrusia. La meta de este artículo es investigar las características de la situación actual en el arte textil de Bielorrusia a principios del siglo XXI. Debido a las peculiaridades del desarrollo político y socioeconómico del país, hasta hace poco, textil artístico en Bielorrusia desarrollaba de una manera especial. Este artículo podrá formar una idea para la comunidad científica y artística internacional sobre el estado actual del textil artístico en Bielorrusia e identificar las características, problemas y perspectivas en el desarrollo de esta área.

Palabras clave

Arte textil | Arte de Bielorrusia | tejeduría | identidad cultural.

Abstract

This article narrates on the contemporary stage of professional textile art development in Belarus. The goal of this article is to follow the trace of textile art space evolution at the beginning of the 21st century in Belarus. Due to the country's specific political and socio-economic development, until recently, Belarusian textile art has been developing in its own, unique way. This article will allow us to inform international scientific and artistic community about the current state of textile art in Belarus, to distinguish its specificity, current problems, and prospects of its development.

Keywords

Textile art | Belarus art | weaving | cultural identity.

In Belarusian art history, early 1960s are considered to be the beginning of the formation of professional textiles – during this time professional textile artists began to be educated in Minsk, the capital of Belarus, and the production of monumental tapestries was launched in the town of Borisov.

Over the 60 years in the history of contemporary fiber art in Belarus, this direction has developed from aiming towards creating monumental tapestry for public spaces of Soviet ideology back in the 1960s, to the creation of textile sculptures, installations and environmental projects in the 2010s. The main centers of professional textile art in the country are the cities of Minsk and Vitebsk.

By 2020, we can observe a unique situation when older and younger generations of textile artists are coexhibiting at the same venues in Belarus. Each generation is a carrier of its own unique view of textile art, including preferences in the choice of topics, compositions, formal and plastic solutions, techniques and materials.

In order to present the modern picture of artistic textiles development in Belarus both briefly and in detail, we need to trace the milestones of its evolution in the second half of the 20th century and see how these positions are manifested now. As a rule, most artistic principles and beliefs of authors are formed at the beginning of their artistic career, which is significantly influenced by teachers, environment, socio-economic and political situation in the country. The author of this article proposes to follow the chronology of the key events of the Belarusian textile art of the 1960s – 2020s and consider in this sequence the emergence of the main textile trends.

The year of 1964 can be considered one of the starting points of the development of modern textile art in Belarus, when 70 km. away from Minsk, in the town of Borisov, a workshop on the production of hand-made monumental tapestries was first given at the Artistic Combine of Decorative and Applied Arts. The textile workshop was headed by two prominent artists: Gennady Gorkunov (1939 – 1999) and Alexander Kishchenko (1933 – 1997). When creating monumental tapestries, the artists diligently used the ideas of the new tapestry of the legendary French artist, Jean Lurçat. The tapestry compositions were of a narrative nature, flat and decorative, the image was partly illustrative with a high level of stylization, the number of colors was limited. It is important to note that artists continue to use these principles in many monumental tapestries of the early 21st century.

It is important to draw your attention to the fact that official art in the USSR and Belarus, among other things, developed under the conditions of censorship and the «Iron Curtain», which pushed artists to work in a somewhat «safe» way. Only those works were encouraged, the subject of which corresponded to the ideology of the state, revealed the themes of love and glorification of the Motherland, talked about military victories, and similar. At the beginning of the 21st century, we see peaceful and loyal art outside of politics, which is also one of the unique local features.

In the period of 1960 – 1970s two main centers for the development of textile art in Belarus emerged in the cities of Minsk and Vitebsk. This was due to the following circumstances: both cities were strong cultural centers of the country; at the same time, higher education institutions were opened there, training specialists in the field of textile art and design. Also, large factories of the textile industry were concentrated there.

In Minsk, the Belarusian State Theater and Art Institute (abbreviated as BSTAI) first began to train professional textile artists in 1961. Students mastered the profession of a textile artist, which included mainly the orientation towards the design of fabrics for production and interior tapestry. The artist and teacher Angelina Beltyukova (1924 – 2011), who also worked on the creation of the first monumental tapestries in Borisov, greatly influenced the formation of students' artistic views.

Textile students underwent practical training at various textile factories, including the Art Factory in Borisov. After graduation, many young artists worked on the creation of cardboard for monumental tapestries in Borisov. This enterprise accepted a large number of government orders from all over the Soviet Union, and quite quickly this direction became the hallmark of the country. The late 1960s – early 1990s are considered to be the heyday of the monumental interior tapestry of Belarus. The apogee of this was the «Tapestry of the XX century» by Alexander Kishchenko, entered in the Guinness Book of Records as the largest tapestry in the world (1400 x 1900 cm., 1995). To this day, hand weaving tapestry is one of the leading techniques for creating artistic works among Belarusian textile artists.

At the beginning of the 21st century, representatives of the «old school» of Belarusian textiles are the students of Angelina Beltyukova, artists Nina Pilyuzina (born in 1944), Olga Gridina (1945 – 2012), Lyudmila Petrul (born in 1947), Larisa Gustova (born in 1947), Lyudmila Puteyko (born in 1947), Valentina Bartlova (born in 1951), Irina Danilova (born in 1951), Margarita Schemeleva (born in 1952), Galina Krivoblotskaya (born

in 1953), Olga Demkina (born in 1953) and other authors. They graduated from BSTAI during 1960 – 1970s. Many of them have created monumental tapestries for public interiors. In their author exhibition works, these artists work mainly in the direction of classical hand weaving in tapestry.

Nina Pilyuzina is one of the lead representatives of modern Belarusian tapestry. In 2004, she and Valentina Bartlova became laureates of the state prize of Belarus for the creation of monumental tapestries for the Palace of the Republic in Minsk. Her works are filled with poetry and depth of images, compositions are both pictorial and decorative in nature. In her tapestries, she often recreates the moments of rural lifestyle, poeticizes the Belarusian nature. According to the author of the article, one of the artist's most remarkable works is the tapestry «It is easier to the dead while the living carries the unbearable burden of their death in the heart» (cotton, wool, lurex, jute, hand weaving, 150 x 260 cm., 2005). The tapestry depicts an auroch surrounded by fog. This animal is the national symbol of Belarus. The work is filled with an atmosphere of strength, wisdom and deep sadness. This is a virtuoso work in the technique of hand weaving; subtle nuanced color combinations create the effect of watercolor painting.

In contrast, the works of Margarita Schemeleva are performed with a more formal conditional approach. Her tapestries are characterized by clear graphics, soft lines, decorative spots, bright colors in combination with various techniques of smooth hand weaving. The tapestry «A Little Aged Lady» clearly demonstrates the main positions of the author's style of the artist. The tapestry depicts a stylized, almost abstract image of a woman, in which elements of a traditional costume are hardly noticeable (cotton, wool, 130 x 80 cm., 2013). Margarita Schemeleva mainly creates chamber tapestries and textile miniatures. The artist's works are filled with deep personal experiences, impressions and reflections on everyday life. One can feel the impressionistic mood and influence of the ideas of Wassily Kandinsky in them. The artist has been teaching at the Belarusian State Academy of Arts (former BSTAI) from 1996 to the present, and nurtures in her students the love to tapestry weaving, teaches them not to avoid bright colors, and create complex compositions that are deep in meaning.

Another striking representative of the Belarusian school of tapestry is Lyudmila Petrul. Her hand woven tapestries are also characterized by poetic images, irony at times, and the atmosphere of mystery. The artist works with complex polychrome color combinations. Lyudmila Petrul is an example of an artist who is always in a creative search for new forms

and compositional techniques. For 50 years of Lyudmila's creative path, we can follow the movement from figurative compositions towards non-objectiveness, from classical smooth weaving and the side of inclusions of textures from sisal, shells and other materials. For example, in the series of tapestries «Story About the Potatoes» (1983 – 1984), the author tells about the stages of growing and harvesting potatoes in a peasant family, which is a symbolic plot for most Belarusians. The figures are illustrated schematically, stylized in the manner of cubism or even partly in the style of eight-bit video games. Subsequently, in the «Weeping Willow» series (1994 – 2004), the artist creates abstract tapestries, where she deliberately leaves the traditional rectangular shape of the canvas. Hand woven tapestries from this series are symmetrical, with a clear compositional structure and soft geometry. It is important to note that at the moment Lyudmila Petrul is the only artist in the Republic of Belarus whose works have participated in the International Triennial of Tapestry (2013, Łódź, Poland).

Since 1975, the Vitebsk Technological Institute of Light Industry has also begun to train textile artists. In this educational institution, students were focused primarily on working at textile enterprises that produced various fabrics, carpets and other industrial textiles. This circumstance did not prevent the artists of Vitebsk from occupying their own special niche in the cultural space of Belarus. Famous contemporary artists of the «Vitebsk school» are Gennady Faley (born in 1957), Natalia Lisovskaya (born in 1958), Vladimir Lisovenko (born in 1959), Tatyana Kozik (born in 1962), Svetlana Oksin (born in 1962), Svetlana Barankovskaya (born in 1965), Tatyana Makletsova (born in 1966), Irina Kirillova (born in 1971), Natalia Kimstach (born in 1975) and other authors.

Many artists of the Vitebsk textile school tend to search for their own unique author's style. Just like in Minsk, Vitebsk artists work primarily in the direction of hand weaving. However, there is an interesting shift in priorities here. Artists do not focus on maintaining the purity of technical and compositional techniques. They begin to experiment more with textures and mix techniques. There is a greater gravitation towards abstract compositions. Openwork and loose tapestries appear, which start to be exhibited not only on the walls, but also in space. The openness to experiments and creative searches was partly due to the close proximity of Vitebsk to the Baltic States, where the art of textiles has always kept pace with Western European trends.

Since the 1980s, many Vitebsk artists have been working with linen. It is linen that has been the traditional textile material of Belarus for a long time. Many contemporary authors today turn in their works to fi-

bers, threads and fabrics from linen, thus creating a link to the national character of the work through the material. For example, artist Gennady Faley creates large-scale woven fabrics from linen and wool. The compositions of his works are stylistically in the range between Suprematism and expressive abstractionism. For example, «the Wind» tapestry (linen, wool, 230 x 160 cm., 1998) is close in spirit to the paintings of Jackson Pollock and Lenore Krasner. Large expressive canvases are full of lively energy conveyed with the help of line graphics and texture. The author's favorite colors are natural linen color, as well as red, black, white, which are the traditional colors of Belarusian folk textiles.

Vladimir Lisovenko creates wall tapestries using linen threads, rags of denim and magnetic tape, which raises both the problem of national identity and the issue of recycling. We can trace a subtle irony in the selected materials, since in the 1970s – 1980s it was almost impossible to purchase denim in the USSR, and most foreign music was banned. The works of Vladimir Lisovenko are filled with themes of creation and love for the world. Tapestries seem to exist outside of time.

Another representative of the Vitebsk art textile school is Svetlana Barankovskaya. The artist works mainly in the technique of hand weaving, with the help of which she creates wall and spatial compositions. In her works, the author often uses linen, wool and newsprint. Most of her work is devoted to the search for the Belarusian cultural code. The author often refers to historical themes and images of personalities who fought for the self-determination of the Belarusian people in the past.

One of the latest works by Svetlana Barankovskaya is the textile installation «White Noise» (2019), co-authored with the artist Tatyana Makletsova. This installation became the winner of the Fourth Belarusian Triennial of Decorative and Applied Arts in 2019. The work tells about the modern era of information overload. The central part of the installation consists of 6 tapestries created in the technique of hand weaving, where the main material of the weft thread is newspaper paper and handwritten sheets. Artists achieve the effect of a uniform gray gradient on the canvas, the visual effect of which is reminiscent of the noise from an old TV screen. The color of the canvases changes from white at the beginning of the installation to dark gray at the end. On both sides of the central part there are 6 canvases, where horizontal lines (also made of paper) are embroidered on a plastic translucent mesh. Among the latter, there are black, white and red canvases. Side canvases allow to achieve the effect of three-dimensionality and multi-layered information field around each of us.

Returning to the chronology of the development of artistic textiles in Belarus, we see that in the late 1970s - early 1980s experimental directions of textile art started to emerge. The event that finally fixed the stage of the formation of this phenomenon in textiles was the exhibition «Experimental Textiles» held in 1988 in Minsk. The author of the idea and the curator of the project was Larisa Finkelstein, a famous art critic. The concept of the exhibition was a direct experiment in textiles, which included non-standard work with texture, volume and space, the identification of extraordinary plastic possibilities using non-standard materials and techniques (art works by Galina Krivoblotskaya, Lyudmila Puteyko). More than 20 artists took part in the exhibition. The exhibited works were kind of a challenge to the conservative structure of the Belarusian art space. For the very first time, works close to the direction of textile sculpture and installation (art works by Tatyana Belousova-Petrovskaya, Valentina Bartlova) were presented at the exhibition. The dominant feature in the space of the «Experimental Textile» exhibition was the textile installation «Being» (1988) by Ludmila Rusova and Igor Kashkurevich. This was the first textile installation of a kind in Belarus, which was a three-dimensional Suprematist composition of white, red and black threads stretched in space on a wooden frame. It should be noted that this particular color combination is not only one of the main colors used by the Suprematists, but also the main colors for traditional Belarusian textiles.

Ludmila Rusova (1954 – 2010) was an innovative artist who did not fit into the framework of regulated Soviet art. This artist used to work in a variety of areas of art in different periods of her life. Her hand woven tapestries carried the ideas of Suprematism, however, unlike the idea of Malevich's struggle for pure form for the sake of form itself, her works were filled with witty and conceptual overtones. She often played on the themes of religion and Belarusian folk traditions, life and death. Subsequently, she continued her Suprematist searches in textile installations, environments, and then performances, where her creative solutions also turned out to be close to the ideas of Yves Klein and Marina Abramovich. In the 2000s, she was called the «godmother of Belarusian actionism»¹. Also, the artist was engaged in experimental photography and poetry. The artistic path of Ludmila Rusova appeared to be very influential for the further generations of Belarusian artists.

1. KLINAU, Artur: «Ludmila Rusova». Articles: JANKOUSKAJA, Natallia, SIACKO, Tania. Minsk: Goliaths, 2015, p. 14.

Pavel Bondar (1952 – 2019) was a legendary experimental textile artist in Belarus. In the early 1980s, he was actively working in the direction of author's tapestry and author's quilt technique, the author's painting on fabric. He experimented with materials, created three-dimensional textile forms. In his works, the artist paid great attention to color, textures, mixing techniques and the search for an expressive author's style. In terms of the boldness of his approaches, the visual language of his works was close to the work of Sheila Hicks, Jagoda Buić, and other authors working in the experimental directions of fiber art.

In his work, the artist was especially attentive to the revival and re-thinking of folk traditions. For example, he created «rushnik» tapestries (from the Belarusian language «towel») using the technique of the author's hand weaving. In the folk culture of Belarus, ceremonial towels were of great importance – they were given magical properties, they were used as a talisman what is more, they were used to decorate religious icons in houses and crosses on village gateways. These towels were used in rituals during almost all significant events in a person's life – at birth, christening, wedding, calendar holidays and funeral. Many of these traditions still exist today.

In his «rushnik» tapestries, Pavel Bondar reflected his love for his native land, its nature. There is a lot of poetry in the images of his tapestries. He used soft and subtle color solutions, combines abstraction and visual imagines.

One of the iconic works of Pavel Bondar is the tapestry «Who goes there? » (linen, wool, synthetics, hand weaving, author's technique, 235 x 165 cm., 2002). The name of the tapestry is taken from the title of a namesake poem of 1905 – 1907 written by the Belarusian poet Yanka Kupala, which refers to the oppressed Belarusian people.

Pavel Bondar taught at the Belarusian State Academy of Arts (formerly the Belarusian State Theater and Art Institute) in the period between 2000 – 2014, where he set up an “experimental textile laboratory”. In his studies, he actively promoted the ideas of experiment in textiles, such as adding of assemblage and trash art, three-dimensional forms, recycling, etc. This gave a strong impetus to the development of this direction in Belarus. His students were Anna Klimenko (born in 1979), Denis Tropashko (born in 1981), Maryana Karpovich (born in 1983), Veronika Bogacheva (born in 1987), Ksenia Tikhonova (born in 1987), Tatiana Lifshich (born in 1989), Natalia Filippenko (born in 1990), Khrystsina Vysotskaya (born in 1992), Vlad Kniga (born in 1992), Agata Karobka (born in 1993) and other artists.

Returning to the early 1990s, at a time when the USSR collapsed and Belarus acquired the status of an independent state, the situation in artistic textiles changed. As the economic situation in the country was changing, the number of state orders for art objects reduced significantly. Monumental tapestries in such quantity as it was in previous years were no longer needed. As a consequence, the private sector started to develop, and the need for small, more chamber formats of works was increasing. More and more artists are beginning to engage in designer hand weaving and textile miniatures. However, in view of the changes that had come, many textile artists started to work in other areas of art or even left the profession, some emigrated to other countries.

At that very time the cultural environment showed an increase in interest to traditional culture, Belarusian folklore, folk crafts. The artistic space of Belarus used to be characterized by an appeal to the themes of folk culture and history, but in certain periods these themes became especially relevant. Belarusian traditional textiles are still an important component of the national culture. We meet the ideas of rethinking the motives of traditional ornaments everywhere, and, first of all, in the works of textile artists.

Since 1992, another textile department has been functioning at the Belarusian State University of Culture and Art in Minsk. At BSUCA, the topic of preserving the traditions of folk culture and crafts comes to the fore, and textiles are no exception. On this occasion, it is worth noting the work of the artist Alla Nepochelovich (born in 1951), a 1975 graduate of the BSTAI. She is one of the leading representatives of finely patterned head weaving. Alla Nepochelovich is a conservative artist who is passionate about keeping the textile techniques and materials clean. The main theme of her work is the idea of preserving national traditions and rethinking the compositions of Belarusian traditional homespun bedspreads and ritual towels. In addition to linen and wool, in recent years she has introduced metal threads and glass beads into canvases. Alla Nepochelovich has been teaching at the University of Culture and Art since the very opening of the textile direction there and conveys her creative vision and attitude towards textiles to her students.

As for the BSTAI in the 1990s, it should be noted that in the period of 1979 – 1989 the textile department at BSTAI was closed, which led to the loss of the continuity of generations of textile workers in Minsk. When the direction was restored and headed by the artist Valentina Bartlova in 1989, new teachers came to replace the «old school» with new programs and a new vision of textile art. Teachers encourage rethinking folk traditions and working in different textile techniques. It should be added

that in 1991 BSTAI was reorganized, and in 2001 it was renamed into the Belarusian State Academy of Arts (hereinafter BSAA).

At that time, Belarus opened its borders to foreign states, and much of the previously closed information about the state of art abroad was becoming more accessible. For young artists, graduates of the Belarusian State Academy of Arts in the 1990s, the theme of monumental tapestry ceases to be relevant. The search for ways of self-expression in other directions of textiles begins for the authors. At this time, there is an interest in artistic knitting, heald weaving, patchwork.

The main representative of knitting in the textile space of Belarus is Elena Obodova (born in 1965). She graduated from BSAA in 1997 and is one of the first “post-Soviet” textile artists. She creates three-dimensional textile structures and installations from designer knitted fabrics. The artist pays great attention to form and color. These can be knitted structures made of hyperbolized chain cells; large numbers of knitted bells of human height hanging from the ceiling of the gallery, as in the installation “Overtones” (2013).

Elena Obodova also makes a significant contribution to the development and rethinking of the technique of double-sided heald weaving. This ancient folk weaving technique was characteristic of the western territory of Belarus. The work is carried out on a four-shaft loom and is a system of two warp and two weft threads. The canvases are graphic and contrasting, the coloring is two-tone, where one lighter and one darker color are most often used. As a result, one side is «positive», and the other is «negative» (as in the photo), where both sides are considered front. In her canvases, Elena Obodova reinterprets folklore symbols and gives them a new formal sound.

Another extraordinary artist of this generation is Janna Kapustnikova (born in 1965). In 1993, she graduated from BSAA with a degree in costume design, and to this day she creates stage costumes for theater performances, films and television. In addition, in the 1990 – 2000s, the artist was actively involved in decorative painting, which simultaneously contains the qualities of Fauvism, Pop Art and Naive Art. Her works are influenced by Henri Matisse, Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein.

In the early 2010s, Janna Kapustnikova went beyond decorative painting and began to create painted carpets. She took the «malyavanka» as the source of inspiration - traditional painted carpets, characteristic of the folk art of western Belarus of the late 19th century - mid-20th century. Folk artists of that time created decorative carpets, which depicted paradise gardens, palaces, couples in love in boats surrounded by swans,

fantastic animals, bouquets of flowers. Compositions of such carpets are edged with floral borders. This phenomenon in folk art was a result of needy peasants attempting to distract themselves from the bleak reality of their life and bring a piece of paradise into the interior of their homes. The works of that time are considered a unique example of naive art in Belarus.

At the heart of the artistic approaches to painted carpets by Janna Kapustnikova, we can also see the influence of the works of Alena Kish (1889 – 1949), one of the brightest folk artists of that direction, - bright open colors, illustrativeness, and decorative character of the work. Janna's painted carpets go under the general name of «the Dazhinki» series - this is how the national harvest festival is called in Belarus. In her painted carpets, the author raises topical issues. Using irony and sarcasm, she partly criticizes the post-Soviet reality, and partly reminds of the transience of life and death. Carpets with everyday themes of harvest and rural life alternate with themes of funerals, war and more. Her works combine symbols of modern, folk and Soviet culture. Also, the author attaches great importance to the topic of relations between men and women, sexuality and gender differences. In terms of stylistic and narrative approaches of her work, we can draw an analogy with the tapestries of the English artist Grayson Perry. It is important to note that in the late 2010s, Janna began to translate her compositions from the Dazhinki series into the format of machine carpet weaving. Tufted carpets enhance the materiality effect and take the piece to a new level. At the moment, she is the only Belarusian artist using this modern technology to create her works.

In the early 2000s, young artists of the next generation, namely Anastasia Arais (born in 1971), Olga Rednikina (born in 1976), Veronika Fomina (born in 1976), Natalia Azhder (born in 1976), Elena Kolyasnikova-Illkovets (born in 1985), and other authors, begin to actively work in the direction of felting. It is interesting that in the traditional textile culture of Belarus, felting was actively used to create items of winter clothing, but in the professional art of textile in Belarus of the 20th century, it practically did not develop. A tangible impetus to the development of this direction of fiber art for Belarus was provided by an artist from Sweden Gunilla Paetau Sjöberg, who came to Belarus several times to exchange knowledge.

Anastasia Arais is a leader in felting direction in Belarus. The artist creates deep works on a variety of topics: from the creation of nature to reflections of moments of modern and folk culture. She is engaged in experiments with the formal plastic possibilities of this material. Olga

Rednikina works on planar achromatic felt canvases. In her works, great importance is attached to the place of the image of a person in the plot of the work. Natalia Azhder, in collaboration with Lyudmila Domnenkova, creates abstract volumetric-spatial felt compositions, telling about nature and the human soul.

In the 2010s, three-dimensional textiles began to evolve actively. This has been possible largely due to the plein airs of three-dimensional textiles organized by art critic Larisa Finkelstein. Belarusian textile plein airs were held every summer in Belarus (2012 – 2014), in Montenegro (2015) and in Italy (2016). The curator's goal was to attract textile artists of all generations to participate in the project and provide an incentive for authors to get out of their usual creative comfort zone. During the week of the plein air, the artists had to create a voluminous textile composition on a given theme. Starting from the third edition, the rules of the plein air were more concretized: the work must be precisely sculptural in nature - three-dimensional, independently standing on the podium; the color of the work was limited – in different years it was white, green and red. Materials and techniques were not limited, but had to be within the philosophy of the art of textiles.

The five years of Larisa Finkelstein's project made it possible for artists of different generations to get to know each other better, exchange experiences and views on the development of textile art in Belarus. For five years, more than 40 artists took part in the plein air, including Nina Pilyuzina, Lyudmila Petrul, Valentana Bartlova, Galina Krivoblochkaya, Margarita Schemeleva, Felix Shuneiko, Tatiana Kozik, Anastasia Arais, Olga Rednikina, Maria Borisenko, Khrystsina Vysotskaya, Maryana Karpovich and other authors. The results of each plein air are shown annually at numerous exhibitions of textile sculpture in many major art museums and galleries in the country. This led to a more positive attitude in the three-dimensional textile in the conservative cultural space of Belarus.

One of the main young artists of Belarus working in the direction of volumetric-spatial textiles is Khrystsina Vysotskaya (born in 1992). She went through the laboratory of experimental textiles of Pavel Bondar and textile plein airs by Larisa Finkelstein at the same time. During the 2010s, the young artist developed a recognizable author's style. Using various hand-weaving techniques and author's weaving techniques, she creates abstract textile sculptures. Shape, color and texture are of great importance in her sculptures, often non-textile materials such as wood, metal, cassette tape and plastic are included in her work. The author pays great attention to the internal and external space of art objects, as, for example, in the diptych «Inside and Outside» (2019). In such works,

the author uses the rethought technique of the Belarusian double-sided weaving, which was mentioned earlier.

Since 2015, Khrystsina Vysotskaya has been teaching at the Department of Costume and Textile of the Belarusian State Academy of Arts, where she takes an active position in the development of contemporary trends in the art of textiles and its popularization in Belarus and abroad. Many of her students support the idea of reviving and renewing textile art in Belarus, among them young artists Alexandra Zhuravovich (born in 1992), Ilona Gavina (born in 1994), Anastasia Pukhovskaya (born in 1994), Maria Razumovich (born in 1995), Maya Stepanko (born in 1996), Alina Samsonovich (born in 1996), Victoria Erokhina (born in 1996), Alina Shvaibovich (born in 1998), and others. Artists are working in the direction of an art object and textile installation, add epoxy resin, LED lighting into textile works, develop the theme of trash art, recycling and assemblage; and also develop the direction of digital printing on fabric. In their works, the artists raise a wide range of topics, including the problems of ecology and urbanization, the development of the Internet, talk about the life of the post-Soviet generation of young people and about the place of the Belarusian artist in the world.

Currently, the issue of national self-determination in Belarus is quite acute. The work of the artist Masha Maroz (born in 1991) is aimed at rethinking the topic of Belarusian national identity. The author draws attention to this theme by creating installations, collections of artistic clothing, avant-garde accessories, textile applications, hand-made photo printing (cyanotype) on fabric. In terms of the depth of creative expression, non-standard approaches and a wide range of areas, the work of Masha Maroz can be compared with Ludmila Rusova. The artist takes a position on blurring the boundaries of textile art with other directions and using new media.

Her solo exhibition «The Long Way Home» (2020) at the National Center for Contemporary Arts is a clear example of mixing of styles and meanings that is characteristic of the postmodern tradition. Her style relishes the Suprematism of Kazimir Malevich and the Surrealism of René Magritte and Dorothea Tanning, as well as the atmosphere of the isotericism of Ilya Kabakov. In the gallery space, the author confronts folk traditions and modernity, creating an interactive environment. This is a work about the gradual loss of connection with roots, the loss of meanings and guidelines for further cultural development. The composition of the exhibition space is based on a generalized even canonical interior of a rural house. Let's take a look at some of the details of this environment. In the center of the room there is a table with a still life of ready-made objects,

where individual symbolic objects are made on a laser printer (potatoes, ears and grains of wheat). The author replaces traditional homespun textiles with industrial tarpaulin fabric, and instead of traditional wall carpets, she prints ornaments close to traditional ones on banner fabric. Instead of religious icons on the walls, abstract digital images with glitch art elements. In the «red corner» (the traditional place for the icons) there is also a plasma TV screen, on which the «loading» icon is constantly spinning against a blue background. The entire exhibition space is filled with an atmosphere of melancholy, lost meanings. Since 2016, Masha Maroz has been teaching at the Department of Costume and Textile of the Belarusian State Academy of Arts, where she specializes in avant-garde fashion and the development of modern trends in costume art and design. In addition, the artist works with numerous theaters in Belarus as a stage costume designer.

Art exhibitions are more important in shaping public attitudes towards the art of textiles. In Belarus, exhibitions of textile art are held annually, organized by the public association «Belarusian Union of Artists», as well as at the initiative of individual curators and groups of artists. Let's dwell upon this in more detail. At the moment, an active position in organizing exhibitions in the Union of Artists is taken by art critic and artist Mikhail Tsybul'sky (associate professor of the Department of Fine Arts of the UE «Vitebsk State University named after P.M. Masherov»), artists Olga Rednikina (Head of the Belarusian Union of Artists textile section of Minsk) and Svetlana Barankovskaya (Head of the textile section of Vitebsk), artist Natalya Lisovskaya (associate professor at the Department of Design at Vitebsk State Technological University). Each of the above curators in their projects unite textile artists from all over the country, and also invite authors from Russia, Ukraine and the Baltic countries to participate in joint exhibitions of artistic textiles.

Today, art critic Larisa Finkelstein is one of the leading curators in the field of decorative and applied arts in Belarus. Since the early 1980s, she has been actively promoting this area of art in Belarus. Since 1991, her author's non-commercial conceptual gallery «BRAMA» (from the Belarusian language «gate») has been organizing conceptual exhibitions of decorative art, where she pays particular attention to textiles. Each project of the gallery stands out with an interesting and non-standard concept. The curator establishes clear regulations with the requirements for work, and at the same time encourages artists to experiment. The curator loves to collide different directions of decorative art in a single exhibition space and create interesting situations of their interaction. For example, in 2016, the art gallery «University of Culture» hosted an exhibition following the results of the 5th International Italian-Belarusian plein air

«Dialogue of Sculptures. Red. Black. Italian Exercise». The plein air itself took place in Bologna (Italy) and was attended by textile and metal artists. Interestingly, the textile workers were asked to create textile sculptures and art objects in red, and the metal artist - in black. The result was a unique exposition – it was a kind of dialogues of color, materials, shape and texture.

Another interesting phenomenon in the exhibition textile of Belarus is the curatorial work of the artist and art critic Khrystsina Vysotskaya. Since 2015, she has curated exhibitions of artistic textiles at the Belarusian State Academy of Arts, and since 2018, she has launched an author's curatorial project «Running with scissors». The concept of the project is to show how a textile artist reacts to what is happening in the modern world, where there is an oversaturation of information, the speed of what is happening around and everything that follows from this. The aim of the project is to show actual works of young Belarusian textile artists. The project encourages authors to boldly read the theme of fiber art, conceptualize textiles, bold choice of materials and techniques, as well as interesting work with form and space. The curator invites authors to create works on topical topics for the Belarusian reality. Exhibitions were held in different cities of Belarus. The latest edition of the project was held at the National Center for Contemporary Arts in Minsk in November 2019, in which more than 20 young textile and costume artists took part.

The above projects contribute to the dissemination of information about this art form at the local level. However, this is not enough for the modern Belarusian artistic textiles to become the property of the international cultural space. This task should be solved by larger exhibitions, preferably of an international scale.

In many countries of the world the main platforms for demonstrating the latest achievements in the field of contemporary art are international exhibitions of the biennial and triennial format. Biennale is an art exhibition, festival or competition held every two years. By analogy, the triennial is held every 3 years. It is impossible to overestimate the importance of the legendary The Lausanne International Tapestry Biennials (1962 - 1995, Switzerland), which had a huge impact on the formation of the modern vector of development of artistic textiles in the world and was the first exhibition of this format. Nowadays one of the leading exhibitions of this kind The International Tapestry Triennial in Lodz (since 1975, Poland), International Triennial of Mini-Textiles in Angers (since 1993, France), «From Lausanne to Beijing» International Fiber Art Biennale (since 2000, China), The International Biennial of Contemporary Textile Art WTA (since 2000, Latin America and Spain), Contemporary

Textile Art Biennial «Contextile» (since 2012, Portugal), Russian Triennial of Contemporary Tapestry (since 2011, Russia) and other exhibitions. We can rarely see works of contemporary Belarusian textile artists at such international exhibitions. Much more often we can meet Belarusian authors at international exhibitions in neighboring countries - Russia, the Baltic States, Poland and Ukraine. I dare to suggest that the main reasons for this may be language barriers, financial difficulties, and others.

In modern Belarus there are no biennials or triennials of textile art. This may be due to various reasons, including economic ones. The largest exhibition of this kind in the country is the Belarusian Triennial of Decorative and Applied Arts, where, since 2011, once every three years, works of Belarusian artistic ceramics, glass, metal, wood and textiles have been demonstrated. This exhibition-competition is organized by the public organization Belarusian Union of Artists. The exhibition takes place in the art gallery Palace of Arts in Minsk.

The past 4 triennials have shown that the direction of textile art is usually represented by the largest number of participants. In general, in the exposition of the Belarusian triennial, we can see the same picture that we see at most republican exhibitions ornamented by the Belarusian Union of Artists, since in a country with 9.5 million inhabitants the circle of personalities in the art community is not too large.

As shown by the last 4th Belarusian Triennial of Decorative and Applied Arts, flat wall works prevail among textile works. Most often these are tapestries, batiks, textile applications, felt panels, knitted compositions, mixed techniques. To a lesser extent, there are textile sculptures, three-dimensional art objects and installations. We are not talking about environmental and textile performances at all, although these trends are starting to appear on other more avant-garde exhibition venues among young textile artists.

The main textile technique at the Belarusian Triennial of Decorative and Applied Arts is weaving. Great importance is attached by artists to classical tapestry weaving on a vertical loom or frame, since the Belarusian school of professional artistic textiles was formed on the basis of the monumental interior tapestry of the 1960s. These are the works of such artists as Nina Pilyuzina, Tatiana Belousova-Petrovskaya, Lyudmila Puteyko, Lyudmila Petrul, Larisa Gustova, Antonina Gurshchenkova, Galina Ryabova, Ksenia Tikhonova, Svetlana Terentyeva, Raisa Golovataya and others.

This is followed by the author's tapestry weaving, which is characterized by a more relaxed approach when creating a cloth: mixing va-

rious weaving techniques in one piece, the appearance of openness and openness of the warp threads, the introduction of all kinds of pile textures, mixing different textile and non-textile materials during weaving, and more. Natalia Lisovskaya, Natalia Kimstach, Svetlana Obravovich, Tatyana Kozik, Victoria Erokhina, Natalia Shapovalova, Violetta Nekrasova and other authors work in this direction. Artists, Khrystsina Vysotskaya, Svetlana Barankovskaya, Tatyana Makletsova, who work with 3D compositions, use the author's weaving techniques. But the work of Elena Obodova stands out against the general background with 3D compositions from the author's knitwear.

Artists working in the technique of heald weaving on a horizontal loom strive to rethink the traditions of Belarusian folklore art and bring it to the level of an exhibition art object (Alla Nepochelovich, Elena Obodova, Elena Pyatkevich, Yulia Mordvanyuk and others).

Almost as many pieces of felt at the Triennial could be found as there were woven pieces. Felting in the professional art of textile in Belarus for less than 20 years. However, this textile direction, which is young for Belarusians, is developing rapidly and very actively. These are the works of artists Olga Rednikina, Anastasia Arais, Svetlana Omelchenko, Nina Sokolova-Kubay, Natalia Azhder, Lyudmila Domnenkova, Natalia Lisovskaya. With the help of this technique, all kinds of illustrative, stylized and abstract works are created.

Art painting on fabric in Belarus is not as widespread as weaving, but this technique began to develop back in the 1960s - at the same time as tapestry. The works of each artist are distinguished by their unique creative approach and have their own recognizable style. These are the artists Vadim Udovenko, Margarita Golubeva, Elina Malishevskaya, Alexandra Naiman, Tatiana Fomina, Tatiana Otchik and other authors.

Vera Blintsova and Lyubov Kirillova are the leading artists in Belarus who work in the direction of textile applique (close to the quilt technique). They create works on religious, mythological themes, and you can often find more abstract subjects – decorative landscapes, stylizations of birds, bouquets of flowers and more. In their works, each of the artists invariably uses shiny materials – brocade, silk, lurex, embroidery with beads and glass beads, which gives the work a stained glass character and associations with Byzantine fabrics. Other interesting authors working in mixed applique techniques are Maria Borisenko and Alina Shvai-bovich.

Works made in more experimental approaches to the transformation of textile material, or using completely non-textile materials, were not

presented at the Triennial. This is largely due to the conservative attitude of the selection committee to non-traditional approaches in textiles. Also, there were no works created with the use of modern technologies, such as sublimation printing on fabric, machine jacquard weaving, machine embroidery, machine carpet weaving, laser cutting and many other possible technologies.

Within the framework of the 4th Belarusian Triennial of Decorative and Applied Arts, the Republican exhibition of mini-textiles was held for the first time, with artists from Ukraine as invited guests. This project was mainly attended by the same Belarusian textile artists who participated in the Triennial, so it is not difficult to guess that classic plain-woven tapestries are the main works in the exhibition. A small number of applications, 3D felt works and works in mixed and experimental techniques were presented. The very fact of holding such an exhibition suggests that the conservative society of Belarusian textiles is slowly beginning to change.

We observe the following preference in the choice of themes for works: these are abstract concepts on the beauty of nature, love and relationships, history and architecture, abstract philosophical concepts, and, of course, on the theme of Belarusian culture and identity. The works of Belarusian textile artists presented at the Triennial are the most peaceful, tolerant, polite and apolitical. This is largely due to the atmosphere of unspoken and pervasive censorship in the culture and art of the country.

It should be noted that the exhibitions of the Belarusian Triennial of Decorative and Applied Arts are held without a clearly defined theme and concept. According to the author of the article, this is one of the serious disadvantages of this exhibition. The lack of a clear concept at major Republican exhibitions is a frequent occurrence, but there are exceptions. The concept of the exhibition enables artists to create a work on a topical topic for modern society, try to stop working according to a stable template, get out of the comfort zone. The definition of a topical topic and regulations aimed at the development of contemporary art for the Belarusian Triennial could nudge the authors not only to self-development, but also to the development of the art of textile in Belarus. Unfortunately, most of the Belarusian textile art of the 21st century can be attributed to salon art, which exists in its own special closed world and is divorced from the world artistic process.

Returning to the topic of Belarusian identity, we see that it was and remains relevant for both young and older generations of artists. Each author decides this topic in his own way, someone creates works with

the inclusion of pictorial motives of folk ornaments, red-white-black colors (Gennady Faley, Ludmila Rusova), someone turns to the depiction of historical events and influential cultural figures previous eras (Svetlana Barankovskaya, Olga Rednikina, Nina Pilyuzina, Lyudmila Petrul), someone takes as a basis for creativity the theme of rethinking the form and meaning of folk textiles (Pavel Bondar, Janna Kapustnikova, Masha Maroz). This speaks of the long-term desire of artists to defend the right to self-determination of the culture of Belarus and not let their voice be drowned out in the context of globalization and blurring of intercultural boundaries.

The 2010s showed that in Belarus there is a place not only for conservative wall-mounted salon works, but also for volumetric-spatial art objects, installations and environments. As is often the case, everything rests on the sincere initiative of individuals. In the last decade, active young authors have appeared who are ready to spend energy on the development and promotion of this direction. Therefore, if this trend does not fade away and interest continues to increase, then in the next 10 years we can see the Belarusian "textile explosion", which will finally go beyond the conservative «Soviet» attitude to textiles in the country, will make the direction relevant and interesting for current and future generations of artists.

In order for the art of Belarusian textiles to become the property of the world community, more participation of contemporary Belarusian artists in international projects is needed, as well as the organization of international textile projects in Belarus. Otherwise, this page of Belarusian art will still remain known only at the local level and partially in neighboring countries. International cooperation will give an influx of new energy, inspiration and will serve as a new wave for the development of this direction. The author of the article suggests that the period 1990-2000 was a kind of calm and the accumulation of knowledge about something new for the country about the modern world of textiles, the 2010s became a period of turning point and the beginning of actions towards deviating from the accepted foundations, and the 2020s will become a new milestone in the development of the professional textile art of Belarus.

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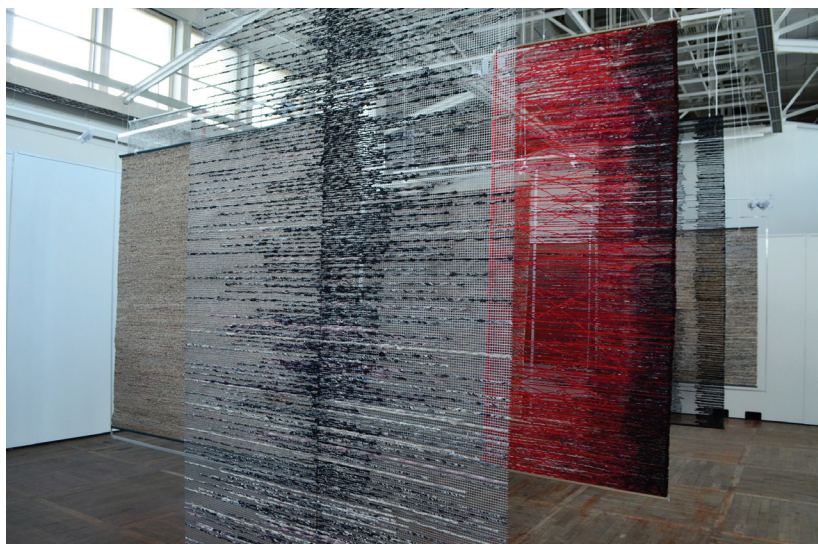


Olga Demkina, "The Dazhinki", 1993, wool, weaving, 300 x 215 cm., from the collection of the National Historical Museum of the Republic of Belarus.

Photo by Khrystsina Vysotskaya.



*Margarita Schemeleva, "A Little Aged Lady", 2013, cotton, wool, 130 x 80 cm.
Photo provided by the author.*



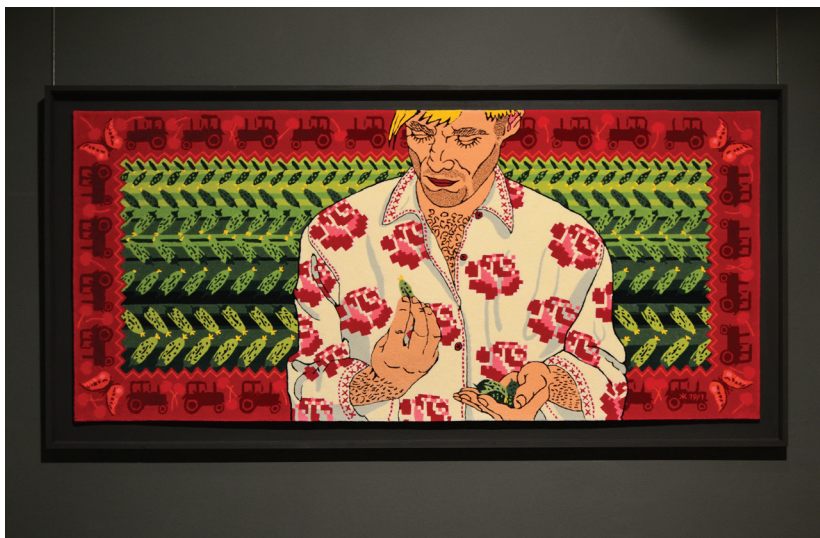
Svetlana Barankovskaya, Tatsiana Makliatsova, "White Noise" project, 2019, linen thread, newsprint, synthetic mesh, weaving, author's technique. Exposition of the Republican exhibition "Triennial of Contemporary Art" (Palace of Art, 2020). Photo by Khrystsina Vysotskaya.



*Ludmila Rusova, "Suprematist Braid", triptych, 1989, wool, weaving,
from the collection of the National Center for Contemporary Arts.
Photo by Khrystsina Vysotskaya.*



Pavel Bondar, "Who Goes There?". 2002, wool, weaving, author's technique, 235 x 165 cm., from the collection of the National Museum of the Republic of Belarus. Exposition of the exhibition "Pavel Bondar and his School" curated by Larisa Finkelstein. Palace of Art, 2020. Photo by Khrystsina Vysotskaya.



Janna Kapustnikova, "Young Agronomist" from the series "The Dazhinki", 2019, wool, silk, machine carpet weaving, from the collection of the "Gallery XO".
Photo by Khrystsina Vysotskaya.

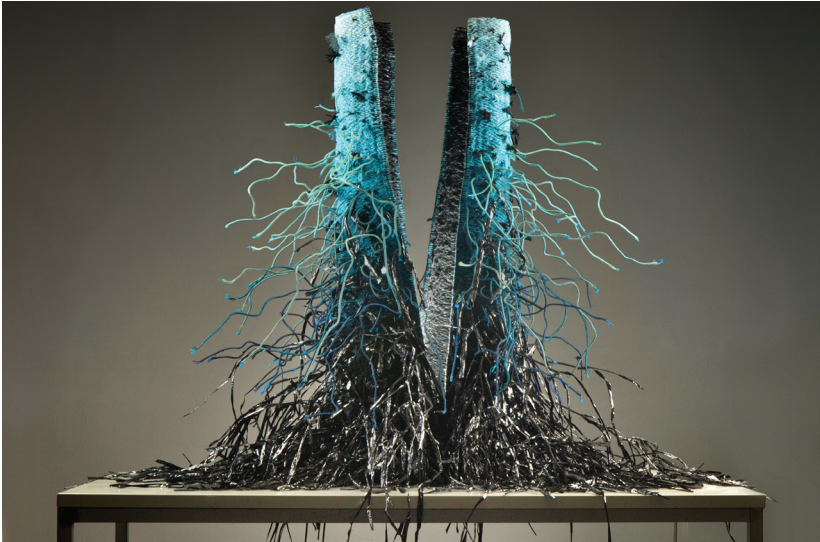


Elena Obodova, "Overtones" installation, 2013-2015, acrylic thread, knitting. Exposition of the solo exhibition "Overtones". Palace of Art, 2015.
Photo by Khrystsina Vysotskaya.



Exposition of the Exhibition following the results of the 5th International Italian-Belarusian plein air "Dialogue of Sculptures. Red. Black. Italian Exercise" curated by Larisa Finkelstein. the art gallery "University of Culture", 2016.

Photo by Khrystsina Vysotskaya.



Khrystina Vysotskaya, "Far Beyond" from the diptych "Inside and Outside", 2019, wool, cotton, synthetic, magnetic film, metal wire, double-sided hand weaving, author's technique, 115 x 150 x 100 cm. Photo by Veronica Nesteruk.



Masha Maroz, "The Long Way Home" project, 2020. National Center for Contemporary Arts of the Republic of Belarus. Photo by Khrystina Vysotskaya.