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VASYL KRYCHEVSKY AS A RESEARCHER OF ART

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Relevance: The research heritage of Vasyl Krychevsky (1873—1952) is known much less, compared to the architectural, graphic, painting, and decorative works of an outstanding, universally gifted personality. This determines the *purpose*— a preliminary systematization and characterization of the artist's and architect's legacy as a scientist and critic. The objects of our article are two dozen of Krychevsky's preserved texts in the scientific and journalistic field on the issues of sculpture, ornament, architecture, and cinema, and the article's subject is their thematic, substantive, and stylistic features. The methodology of our work is establishing a chronology and tracing changes in conceptual approaches, analyzing texts and identifying the interdependence of Vasyl Krychevsky's creative and scientific activities. The conclusion: an impressive erudition, scientific novelty, verbal skill and practical value of the published works allowed V. Krychevsky to be awarded the scientific degree of Doctor of Art Studies in 1939 without a dissertation defense and in the absence of a higher education diploma.

Keywords: history of Ukrainian art and architecture, art studies, art criticism.

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ВАСИЛЬ КРИЧЕВСЬКИЙ ЯК ДОСЛІДНИК МИСТЕЦТВА

Актуальність: Мистецтвознавча спадщина Василя Кричевського (1873—1952) досліджена менше, порівняно з архітектурною, графічною, живописною, декоративною творчістю видатної, універсально обдарованої особистості.

Цим і зумовлена *мета* статті — попередня систематизація та характеристика дослідницького доробку художника й архітектора.

Об'єктом дослідження є два десятки його збережених текстів у науковій і публіцистичній галузі з проблематики скульптури, орнаменту, архітектури, кіно, а *предметом* їх тематико-змістовні та стилістичні особливості.

Методика праці — встановлення хронології та простеження змін у концептуальних підходах, аналіз текстів і виявлення взаємозалежності творчої та наукової діяльності Василя Кричевського.

Автори доходить висновку про вражаючу ерудицію, словесну майстерність і практичну цінність опублікованих праць, їхню наукову новизну, завдяки чому в 1939 р. В. Кричевський був удостоєний наукового ступеня доктора мистецтвознавства без захисту дисертації та за відсутності диплома про здобуття вищої освіти.

Ключові слова: історія українського мистецтва й архітектури, мистецтвознавство, художня критика.

Михайло СЕЛІВАЧОВ

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Introduction. The commemoration of Vasyl Krychevsky' 150th anniversary became an occasion for a series of academic conferences, reevaluation, and reinterpretation of the jubilarian's legacy in the years 2022 and 2023. Relevance: The research heritage of Krychevsky (1873—1952) is known much less, compared to the architectural, graphic, painting, and decorative works of an outstanding, universally gifted personality (ill. 1). This determines the *purpose* — a preliminary systematization and characterization of the artist's and architect's legacy as a scientist and critic. The objects of our article are two dozen of Krychevsky's preserved texts in the scientific and journalistic field on the issues of sculpture, ornament, architecture, and cinema, and the article's *subject* is their thematic, substantive, and stylistic features. The methodology of our work is establishing a chronology and tracing changes in conceptual approaches, analyzing texts and identifying the interdependence of Vasyl Krychevsky's creative and scientific activities.

State of problem research. The materials for such a task have already been largely collected and explained by dozens of publications over the last half of century, in particular, the fundamental works of Vadym Pavlovsky [1] (ill. 2) and Valentina Ruban-Kravchenko [2] (ill. 3).



Ill. 1. Vasyl Krychevsky, photo 1910. URL: https://vufku. org/names/vasyl-krychevskyi/

The decade has not yet passed, when the literature on the master has been supplemented with an exemplary two-volume chrestomathy (2016, 2020) prepared by Kharkiv publisher Oleksandr Savchuk, demonstrating exceptional scholarly and design-compositional precision, achieving a comprehensive understanding available today [3]. This compendium contains all the texts of Krychevsky accessible to contemporary scholars, an outline of his entire artistic heritage, biographical materials, correspondence, articles, and memoirs about the master (ill. 4). It is hard not to agree with the author-compiler that «the two-volume "Vasyl Hryhorovych Krychevskyi: Chrestomathy" will serve as merely the beginning of more thorough and systematic research on the significant figure in Ukrainian culture during the first half of the 20th century» [3, vol. 2, p. 11]. The last thesis of O. Savchuk has already been confirmed by the recently published book [4], dedicated to the ornament compositions of V. Krichevsky (ill. 5–6).

Main part. Let's start with the chronology and statistics. We are aware of nineteen texts during his lifetime, - scientific, non-fiction, polemic - printed in Ukrainian or Russian in periodicals of Ukraine, Russia and other countries between 1910 and 1947. In addition to these, a few publications of documents (judging panel protocols, collective petitions from 1912 to 1914) jointly composed with Krychevsky should be mentioned, as well as the previously discussed working programs for the Kyiv Fine Arts Institute of 1922. The main thematic directions encompass ornament, architecture, and filmmaking. In terms of genres, these texts include factual and theoretical research, self-reflection on his experience, polemical critique and journalism, and emotionally tinted memoiristics. All of them are directly related to the author's artistic and public life.

From the autobiography of 1938 and the «Chronology», compiled by his stepson Vadym Pavlovsky (1907—1986), we know that from the age of 15 Vasyl Krychevsky was already sketching out projects of private houses for the Kharkiv city government [3, vol. 1, p. 279], and from 1889 facades under the supervision of architects Serhiy and Iliodor Zagoskin, Karl Spiegel and (since 1894) academician Oleksiy Beketov. Stefan Taranushenko recalled how young Krychevsky adored all things English, even leaving the service when his superior, engineer Bondarevsky, did not allowed him a



Ill. 2. Book cover: Pavlovsky V. Vasyl Hryhorovych Krychevsky: Life and creativity. New York: UVAN, 1974. URL: https:// diasporiana.org.ua/mistetstvo/9040-pavlovskiy-v-vasilgrigorovich-krichevskiy-zhittya-i-tvorchist/



Ill. 4. Presentation poster: Vasyl Hryhorovych Krychevsky: Chrestomathy. Volume 1. 1891—1943. Kharkiv: O.O. Savchuk, 2016. URL: https://www.nas.gov.ua/UA/Messages/ Pages/View.aspx?MessageID=2640

short journey for visiting exhibitions of British, Russian and Finnish painters in St. Petersburg in 1898. In spite of everything, Krychevsky went to the capital, got acquainted with the latest artistic events, and showed his own works at the Academy of Arts. The professors (in particular, academician of architecture Ivan Zholtovsky) recognized their level as so high that they ad-



Ill. 3. Book cover: Ruban-Kravchenko V. Krychevsky and Ukrainian artistic culture of the 20th century: Vasyl Krychevsky. Kyiv: Krynytsia, 2004



Ill. 5. Cover of the book: Vasyl Krychevskyi: ornament compositions: album. Preface by M.R. Selivatchov, A.O. Puchkov; compiler and editor O.O. Savchuk. Kharkiv, 2023. URL: https:// savchook. com/books/krychevskyi-ornamentni-kompozycii/



Ill. 6. Title pages of the publication: Vasyl Krychevsky: ornament compositions: album. Kharkiv, 2023. URL: https:// uartlib.org/shop/Vasyl-Krychevsky-ornament-compositions/





vised not to join the Academy, to work further and improve independently.

Since the fall of 1898, Krychevsky has been attending lectures at Kharkiv University for at least three years on the history of art by Professor Yehor Redin, on Ukrainian history and archeology by Professor Dmytro Bagaliy, and on ethnography by Professor Mykola Sumtsov. Cooperation with the University continued for several more years. The level of teaching at the University and the level of interested assimilation of knowledge were at that time both radically different from today. Not having an official certificate of higher education (some of his outstanding contemporaries, such as Frank Lloyd Wright, Adolf Loos, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Le Corbusier, did not have it either), Krychevsky obtained at that time the highest education that could be obtained in Kharkiv. In the family of Serhiy Zagoskin, whom Krychevsky recognized as a teacher and a second father, he mastered the English language and learned about the ideas of Ruskin and Morris, read Kant and Schopenhauer, learned about the Trojan excavations of Heinrich Schliemann, met and began to communicate with Hryhori Pavlutsky, Dmytro Yavornitsky, Mykola Bilyashivsky [5]. Home education of this kind is, of course, more important than formal education.

Already at the beginning of the 1890^s, Krychevsky began studying ornamentation. First in independent travels in Ukraine, then in the course of his collaboration with the organizers of the XII Archaeological Congress in Kharkiv (1902), during the design of the Poltava Zemstvo building (1903—1908) and other «Ukrainian style» buildings, while working in the art industry, theater and cinema, printing. Several such drawing studies were published in a three-volume book set prepared by the London magazine «Studio», devoted to the peasant art of Scandinavia, the Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires, as illustrations to the written by M. Bilyashivsky chapter «Little Russia (Ukraine)» [6; 7; 8].

In parallel with the admiration for the «Ukrainian stylistics» of Krychevsky's works, many contemporaries criticized the author for the straightforward use of the past heritage he had studied to solve fundamentally new problems. In particular, «many decorative forms typical of the "Art Nouveau" were mistakenly embodied in other building materials. For example, the typically "wooden" forms of brackets that support the roof slopes are made of stone. The "hexagonal" portal of the main entrance with beveled corners at the top has such, in fact, a wooden form» [9]. It is noted that the interior also has too many ornaments developed by well-known artists Mykola Samokish and Serhiy Vasylkivsky, which mainly reproduces motifs of Ukrainian embroidery in wall paintings (ill. 7).

There is nothing to be angry about: this transfer of some artistic motifs to another material is characteristic of the Art Nouveau era. It feeds on these motives in order to become original, reflecting (like few other stylistics in the history of art) the very ethnic component of various European state formations in their visual individuality: the Lviv or Kraków Secession differ from the Vienna Secession in almost the same way as the German Jugendstil from the Italian liberty. To tell the truth, the author himself was aware of these shortcomings and overcame them in the following works of the 1920^s and 1930^s activity in the field of art criticism contributed to this, in addition to the constant designing practice and persistent study of monuments, which belonged to the previous centuries.

During the 1910^s, Krychevsky actively worked as a jury member of the competition for the project of Taras Shevchenko' monument in Kyiv and published a series of polemical articles, providing arguments against the de-

ficiencies of commonplace projects that garnered support from the majority of powerful individuals [10; 11; 12; 13]. At the same time, he scathingly ridiculed illustrated editions that exploited the «Little Russian» style, actually desecrating it [14]. Justifying the non-identity of the concepts «Ukrainian style» and «Ukrainian baroque», also argues for the existence of the «Ukrainian empire». He did not stop at the criticism of such authorities as George Lukomsky, in polemical fervor not quite rightly reproaching him for the «boldness of the pen» combined with superficiality [15].

Teaching in a number of educational institutions formed the ability of Krychevsky to look at things through the eyes of people with different practical and theoretical training, to formulate problems and tasks with appropriate clarity, intelligibility, and brevity. According to the «Program of the Industrial Workshop» developed by him for the Kyiv Institute of Plastic Arts (1922; now the National Academy of Fine Arts and Architecture), in the first year, students were initially trained to develop their skills and enhance their visual acuity through simple compositions. Then came the «Impromptu tasks on uncomplicated compositions», exercises in placing simple ornamental spots on various themes: lettering design, posters, vignettes, and so on. Following this, the students were expected to acquaint themselves with folk ornamentation and engage in drawing from life.

On the second year of study, the students learned about the optical laws: balance in symmetry and asymmetry, movement and stillness in sketch, the interrelationship of lines and forms, rhythm in drawing and composition. All of this was simultaneously accompanied by practical tasks in various materials including textile design, furniture arrangement with minimal decoration, and book design. In the case of book design, the entire ensemble was considered, including format, font, «playing with font sizes» for display face typing of titles, wrapper design, end-papers, vignettes, headpieces, and tailpieces.

The third year dealt with the interrelationships of form, line, and color in different materials and techniques. The history of ornamentation was traced in connection with various forms of art and architectural objects of different functional purposes in the West and the East, alongside that the concept of similarity but not identity between artistic and industrial creativity was formed. From the very first year, practical acquaintance with folk art in museums (sketches and material collection) was introduced [16].

This well-thought-out cycle of learning stages progressed from propaedeutics to more complex tasks with the inseparability of practical and theoretical aspects. Had anyone paved such a preceptorial way before Krychevsky?

Unfortunately, the scientific study «The Origin of Ukrainian Folk Ornament» prepared by him was burned while a fire in his Kyiv apartment on February 4, 1918, but he strove to restore it all his life. This is evidenced by about two hundred analytical and graphic sketches preserved in museums, which he performed in every minute, free from orders and teaching, and used them in pedagogical and creative activities.

For all its versatility (decorative art, painting, pedagogy), the central place in the Krychevsky's activity belonged to architecture. This is also reflected in his texts, which move from an apology for ornamentation in the 1910^s during the next decade to an appreciation of the primarily functional and expressive form of the structure itself, completely in the spirit of the age. The review of Vadym Shcherbakivsky's book «Architecture of different peoples and in Ukraine» (1910) [17], which could come across as complimentary and condescending, works on Ukrainian architecture were not often published at that time, contains a critical view: «the author, having set his task to introduce Ukrainian architecture into



Ill. 8. Vasyl Krychevsky, photo 1917. URL: https://www.nas.gov.ua/UA/Messages/Pages/View.aspx?MessageID=2640



Ill. 9. Vasyl Krychevsky, photo 1926 (localhistory.org.ua)



Ill. 10. Vasyl Krychevsky with his daughter Halyna, photo 1927 (localhistory.org.ua)



Ill. 11. Vasyl Krychevsky and George Narbut among the founders of the Ukrainian Academy of Arts, photo 1917. URL: https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-society/2766153-ukrainskij-trizub-ozdoba-pitomenna-ne-zapozicena.html

the family of European architectures as their full member, did not try to trace its development from the most distant times available to us, but attached it to "Slavic" and characteristically all-Russian architecture, starting Ukrainian only with wooden buildings of the 17^{th} century» [3, vol. 2, ρ . 26], (ill. 8).

In March 1924, he gave a speech at one of the conferences. «Tasks of the New Architectural School». It should be assumed that its very provisions were soon outlined in an article with the similar title «Architecture of the Age» [18]. Vasyl Krychevsky emphasized the alternative of two approaches to architecture and design. It is about the dominant decoration of the facades, characteristic of the 19th century, and the admiration to the beauty of the technical construction itself, without additional decorations, which is characteristic of the beginning of the 20th century. Under the conditions of the time, these two approaches were often called in the USSR «bourgeois» and «worker-peasant». In his articles Krychevsky demonstrated a similar understanding of the «New Age architecture» and implemented it later in his practical work on the design of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences Historical section (1930) and Shevchenko Memorial Museum on Taras' Hill in Kaniv (1934–1938, together with architect Petro Kostyrko).

In 1925, an article was published about the history and problems of restoration of the house on Khreshchatytsky Lane, where Taras Shevchenko used to live [19]. The following year, the artist and scientist substantiates his project of memorial-museum expositions in the rooms of this landmark in another article [20]. The work on the Shevchenko theme continued in Krychevsky's role as the head of the artistic department at the Odesa Film Studio of VUFKU [t/n: now All-Ukrainian Photo Cinema Administration].

The article of 1926 [21] explains the circumstances on the creation the film «Taras Shevchenko» by Petro Chardynin (in which Krychevsky appeared in a cameo role together with artist Mykhailo Zhuk). Shevchenkiana [t/n: Shevchenko studies] reached its climax in the designing and construction of the Shevchenko Museum at his burial site, extensively described in a 1938 article [22] co-authored with his student and collaborator, future professor at the Kyiv Art Institute, Petro Kostyrko (1897—1982). A year earlier, the article «Architecture and Folk Art» appeared [23]. This publication is, as it were, the theoretical basis of the new principles (com-



Ill. 12. Vasyl Krychevsky, photo from the 1940s. URL: https://www.kyivpost.com/uk/post/11118 (pinterest.com)

pared to the Poltava Zemstvo) of using national property for modern needs (ill. 9—10).

Memoir writing in Krychevsky's literary legacy is represented by detailed recollections of George Narbut, where step by step, with vivid personal color, the artist described the development of their friendliness and the twists and turns of their collaborative work in the newly established Ukrainian Academy of Arts [24]. In particular, the gradual process of George Narbut's adaptation to Ukrainian ornamentation after moving from St. Petersburg to Kyiv is traced, as well as how Vasyl Krychevsky facilitated this process (ill. 11). Naturally, in this genre subjectivity is inevitable, and our author clearly had a reference point: the letters and recollections of his wife, Eugenia Krychevska, the sister of art historians Vadym and Danylo Shcherbakivskys, who inspired the artist in his scholarly pursuits.

Krychevsky's last publication, already as an emigrant, was an analytical review of the new journal «Ukrainian Art» (Almanac No 1, published by the Ukrainian Association of Visual Artists, Munich, 1947), printed in the same year in «Soborna Ukraina» [Соборна Україна, t/n: Unified Ukraine] magazine. With his inherent political adaptability, Krychevsky effortlessly paid homage to the circumstances of time and place, while his observations and assessments remained sincere and persuasive despite the contrasting shifts in the societal landscape and his own aesthetic inclinations (ill. 12).

All Krychevsky's texts (if you are a professor, you must write even if unwilling) possess a distinctive authorial style and inherent tenacity. They are not impersonal «reports on completed work» — as everything in Krychevsky's case, but rather distinctly authorial writing. Concise statements are sprinkled with metaphors or aptly integrated quotations, making it a unique form

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Ill. 13. The Krychevsky family: from left to right: Halyna Krychevska-Linde, Ivan Linde, Irma Linde, Vasyl Krychevsky, Eugenia Krychevska. In the foreground from left to right: Myroslava Linde, Oksana Linde. Caracas, 1951. URL: https://localhistory.org.ua/texts/chitanka/ostrivkipamiatispogadi-pro-vasilia-krichevskogo/



Ill. 14. Grandson of V. Krychevsky — Vasyl Linde-Krychevsky during a visit to the Kyiv National University of Culture and Art at the invitation of the Department of Design and Technologies former head prof. Mykhailo Selivatchov, 2015. Photo by A. Budnyk

of «ornamental prose» in itself. For example, in 1910, while recounting the first competition for the monument to Shevchenko, Krychevsky sharply delineates his impressions as if with a pencil: «we saw a mere dummy, dressed up as Shevchenko. There was no folk song, no psychology of the people, no decorative taste of Shevchenko. One project stood out for the skillful execution of a true master» [3, vol. 2, p. 25]. In the next paragraph, presenting a Nietzschean aphorism, as ever questionable, he concludes: «the grand style arises when beauty wins a victory over the monstrous». He further asserts, «Therefore, this monument could adequately illustrate a certain moment of our history and certain aspects, certain works of Shevchenko <...> but it could not characterize the entirety of Shevchenko, the entire spirit of his creativity».

Conclusions. Even from this fragment, casually taken from his written legacy, one can see that Krychevsky held a confident position regarding the desired nature of a given work, phenomenon, project, or monument, and based on that, he unfolded and developed a narrative where the rhythm of persuasive words took precedence above all else. Of course, with such an approach to human creative products, it is difficult to «please everyone» all the time. But Krychevsky, as a true master, seems not to have longed for that. An impressive erudition, scientific novelty, verbal skill and practical value of the published works allowed V. Krychevsky to be awarded the scientific degree of Doctor of Art Studies in 1939 without a dissertation defense and in the absence of a higher education diploma.

Non multa sed multum — this is the most general characterization of Vasyl Krychevsky's art-historical attainment: not extensive in quantity, but of the highest professional caliber, rich in content and ideas, filled with multitude of meanings and nuances. All his texts are contained in the already mentioned two-volume anthology, and the bibliographic references also mostly come from there. Most of the manuscripts were preserved thanks to the care of the descendants, primarily the daughter Galina Vasylivna Krychevska-Linde and her son Vasyl Ivanovich Linde-Krychevsky. Representatives of various generations of the family visited Ukraine several times and handed over a significant part of the scientific heritage of their glorious ancestor to our museums (ill. 13—14)¹.

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¹ Author's note: when writing the article, the English translation of our text by Diana Sheludkevich was used from the album «Vasyl Krychevskyi. Ornamental compositions. Kharkiv, 2023». We appreciate very much the permission of publisher Oleksander Savchuk.

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