

## ИЗОБРАЗИТЕЛЬНОЕ ИСКУССТВО

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**Portrait in Contemporary Russian Painting in the Context of World Art: A Typology of the Genre\****S. M. Gracheva*

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In Russian fine art, portrait painting has been traditionally distinguished by extraordinary variety and depth, reflecting the figurative and stylistic searches of artists of different periods. Russian art historians have comprehensively studied the portrait genre in the history of art. At the same time, the well-established classification of genres does not allow to take into account completely the variety of trends and approaches to the depiction of a person in contemporary art. The understanding of the portrait genre's boundaries in contemporary art is extremely blurred. Sometimes it means either any image of a person, or even the absence of one at all. It appears essential and important to consider the work of Russian artists in the context of international visual art practices to compose a more holistic picture connected with general cultural development. The article proposes to expand the established typology of the portrait genre adopted in Russian art. The already well-known typology of portrait painting can be updated with other types of portrait based on the semantic and semiotic analysis of artistic works of the late 20<sup>th</sup>–21<sup>st</sup> century. It is important to study contemporary Russian portrait painting from the perspective of a variety of typological models, and to use the new language of contemporary art history to understand the processes taking place in Russian painting of the late 20<sup>th</sup>–21<sup>st</sup> century, in order to facilitate the entry of Russian art into the international cultural context. An idea has been matured to create a National Portrait Gallery in Russia which would collect portraits and self-portraits of the greatest personalities of our era in a real and virtual space.

*Keywords:* portraiture typology, self-portrait, portrait-role, representative portraiture, pseudo-representative portrait, urban portrait, "face-off" portrait, existential portrait, art object portrait, "selfie" portrait.

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The portrait genre has inspired and continues to inspire many philosophical and even mystical reflections, as evidenced by the outstanding works of world literature (N. V. Gogol, O. Wilde, J. Joyce). As Yuri Lotman characterized it, “a portrait is like a double mirror: in it, art is reflected in life, and life is reflected in art. Not only the reflections but also realities change places. On the one hand, reality in relation to art is an objective given; on the other — this function is carried out by the art, and the reality is a reflection in a reflection” [1, p. 514].

Russian art historians have comprehensively studied the portrait genre in the history of art, in particular, M. V. Alpatov [2], V. N. Graschenkov [3], V. E. Lovyagiva and V. A. Lenyashin [4], and D. V. Sarabyanov [5]. A typology of genres was carried out by several authors, such as V. S. Manin [6] and N. A. Yakovleva [7]. A solid theory of the portrait genre was formed, thanks to the fundamental research of M. Adronnikova [8], G. Elshevskaya [9], A. G. Gabrichevsky [10], Yu. M. Lotman [1], B. R. Vipper [11], L. S. Zinger [12], and others. Many books and articles have been published on specific problems of this genre and its outstanding representatives.

In 1912, Jacob Tugendhold published an article in which he dreams of creating a new type of portrait of a person as a portrait of an era when “the Dionysian torment of individuality will be overcome in the name of a new holistic Apollonian personality,” and the “proud and free” universal man, akin to a Renaissance Man personality, will arise again [13, p. 40]. Gradually, a somewhat paradoxical attitude to the portrait genre’s tasks has been formed in art criticism. According to it, expressing the individual principle in the portrait picture should be replaced by designating some socially significant symbols of an era.

The problem of a “portrait-picture” was quite acute. For instance, in the 1920s Nikolay Tarabukin, looking at a subject of a painting as an element of form, wrote that “portraiture, landscape painting and interior occupy intermediate stages between the typical subject painting genre and typically subjectless — the still art” [14, p. 45–6]. For the researcher, the awareness of the unique individuality of a person who is portrayed is a much more valuable quality of a portrait. For comparison, in Soviet art, the ideas of unification and development of a special “new man” destined for total mass actions and desired in a modern industrial era, became central.

One of the most important problems of studying portrait painting of the 20<sup>th</sup> century presented in art criticism and theoretical history publications is finding and developing a new portrait typology. Suggested portrait types reflected a creation of some kind of a mythology based on the Soviet ideology.

The portrait as a special genre in the history of art was comprehensively analysed in the famous and absolutely unique collection of articles by the State Academy of Artistic Sciences (the SAAS), “The Art of Portrait”. A. Gabrichevsky, N. Zhinkin, N. Tarabukin, and B. Shaposhnikov are among the most interesting authors [15]. In particular, they object to the literal copying of nature and a documentary fixation of the original in a portrait. According to Alexander Gabrichevsky, a portrait is a purely artistic sign, expressing that what could be called a portrait personality: “the similarity of a portrait is not external or internal” [15, p. 63–4]. The attempts of the SAAS researchers to create a theory of the portrait genre from the perspective of artistic, intrinsic form were very bold and relevant at that time. Its relevance remains today when we celebrate the centenary of the SAAS.

Artists all over the world are turning to the portrait genre in an attempt to express their ideas about the Universe and Man. It is represented across the entire range of artistic trends — from realism and academism to abstract forms of painting, conceptualism and other contemporary art movements. Exhibitions of famous museums have been dedicated to the portrait — for example, large-scale exhibitions at the State Russian Museum “Portrait in Russia. 20<sup>th</sup> century” in 2001 [16] and at the National Portrait Gallery in London in 2005–2006 [17]. Among the famous galleries of portraits and self-portraits, not only the ones at the Smithsonian Institution [18], Uffizi Galleries [19], National Gallery of Ireland [20] or the Ateneum [21] are worthy the mention, but also at Erarta in Saint Petersburg [22]. It seems that the idea has matured to create a National Portrait Gallery in Russia which would collect portraits and self-portraits of the greatest personalities of our era in a real and virtual space.

The most prominent artists of the 20<sup>th</sup>–21<sup>st</sup> centuries showed interest in the portrait genre, subjecting it to a significant artistic transformation. Among them, A. Warhol, A. Wyeth, L. Freud, D. Hockney, F. Bacon, H. R. Giger, E. Fuchs, Ch. Close, J.-M. Basquiat, M. Abramović, B. Viola, and others. The classification of genres established in Russian literature does not allow the inclusion of all the diverse trends and approaches to depict a person in contemporary art. Several researchers, including W. Malcolm [23], J. Walker [24], W. Steiner [25], J. Woodall [26], S. West [27], and L. Bradnock [28] consider both traditional classification of the portrait genre and a new typology connected with modernism and postmodernism perspectives. The authors point out the impact of photography and cinema on the development of portrait painting in fine arts. Studies of the portrait are carried out in a wide cultural aspect, and in all forms of art — literary criticism, musicology, and theatre studies [29–32].

Further, it is worth noting that, unfortunately, works of contemporary Russian artists are nearly absent from international studies on the history of portraiture. They have not been inscribed in the global cultural context and need to be studied from the perspective of art history science [33]. Attempts at some kind of integration have been made, though. For example, in late 2019 — early 2020 the Shanghai Cooperation Organization held a large-scale exhibition, the “Tour Portrait” at the Tsinghua University Museum in Beijing. The exhibition showed the state of the portrait genre in the SCO countries. Russia was represented in the artworks by Saint Petersburg academic artists (A. S. Charkin, G. V. Bernandsky, Yu. V. Kalyuta, O. N. Shorov, K. V. Grachev, E. V. Gracheva, K. Li, Kh. V. Savkuev, A. V. Tyshchenko, S. A. Danchev); the author of this article was one of the exhibition curators [34].

Interest in a new portrait typology is illustrated in the works of Russian researchers who propose new types in contemporary art, such as a “still life portrait” and “face-off portrait” (see: [35; 36]), or consider traditional portrait forms in Eastern cultures which can also be applied to the contemporary typology of the genre (see: [37; 38]). Studying the portrait from the postmodernist aesthetics perspective, the authors note that in contemporary art “we are talking about a disappearance of a person (M. Foucault), about a levelling of the human in a person (M. Horkheimer), about a replacement of individual values by common ideas (T. Adorno), as well as a skeptical attitude towards any kind of identity (J.-F. Lyotard)” [30, p. 3].

As Wendy Steiner accurately formulates, “The semiotic status of the portrait is equally complex. The painted portrait is assumed to be iconic, resembling what it represents.

It is also indexical, however, gesturing towards the extra-artistic actuality of the subject and functioning in an almost magical fashion so as to render that subject present. But in doing so, it depends on semiotic symbols — title, iconography — to establish the subject's identity in a definitive manner. A fusion of icon, index, and symbol, of centripetal and centrifugal reference, the portrait is an extremely complex semiotic structure" [25, p. 173].

Contemporary researchers explain the semiotic structure of the portrait as follows: "in the art field, the recognition of the person being portrayed is almost the only condition that ensures consistency of the portrait genre <...> In the visual sphere, only the works by authors who have abandoned the aesthetics of realism, can serve as examples of overcoming a certain canon within sociocultural dynamics, from icons to caricatures" [30, p. 16–7]. While it is possible to accept, to an extent, "abandoning the realism aesthetics" as an artistic trend in contemporary portrait painting, realism has surely remained as a method used by contemporary artists in the portrait genre, despite certain transformations. Realism is deeply rooted in the Russian artistic tradition, and not only in connection with the Soviet ideology of the 20<sup>th</sup> century [39–41]. This is why in contemporary Russian portraiture the "recognisability" of the model and the obligatory similarity of the appearance often continue to be mandatory. This does not, however, exclude the variety of artistic searches and strivings to express the artists' relation to the world and the person in more acute forms: 'A View from Within'" [42].

Well-known portrait typology, such as: self-portraits, representative portraits, chamber, psychological, group, historical, theatrical, and type portraits, can be expanded and updated to include other portrait types based on a semantic and semiotic analysis of artworks of the late 20<sup>th</sup> — early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. For example, in contemporary Russian painting the following portrait types, born of contemporary artistic creativity and visual arts practitioners, can be identified: countenance portraits, existential portraits, portraits-provocations, inversion portraits, pseudo representative portraits, portraits-masks, gender portraits, still life portraits, "face-off" portraits, and various hybrid types. Other varieties also appear, such as, for example, the "Portrait of the Artist in Old Age" described in a recently published article by N. Zlydneva who suggested that it "forms a specific class of images within the genre" [43, p. 21].

One of the paradoxes of contemporary art is that often the obvious essence of the portrait slips away, the most important aspect that the authors formulated as: "the human face turned out to be the most essential, the quintessence that remains human or ceases to be" [1, p. 518]. Now in the portrait there may not be a human face at all, all that remains are the indirect presence of a person, traces of their stay or a concept associated with them [28]. In the postmodern context, "along with an image of the specific persona, regardless of whether it is real or fictional, living today or living in the past, the portrait genre can contain the image of a character or an object that carries an echo of human existence" [30, p. 18].

It is important to study contemporary Russian portrait painting from the viewpoint of a variety of typological models, as well as to use the new language of contemporary art history to understand the processes that occurred in Russian painting of the late 20<sup>th</sup> — early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries to facilitate the entry of Russian art into the global cultural context.

As the result, in the 20<sup>th</sup> — early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries the boundaries of portraiture have expanded significantly. V. M. Dianova states that in contemporary theory "a certain novelty in understanding the new European worldview is present, which he understands as that a

man creates for himself such a worldview in which he includes himself. Therefore, ‘the man becomes a representative of existence’ [31, p. 10]. As early as the 1920s, A. Sidorov rightly remarked that at that time, interesting “hybrids” appear under the name of portrait — still life, constructive schemes and exercises in the technique of texture or line [44]. In his article “Portrait as a Problem of Sociology of Art”, Sidorov conventionally divides the portrait into a “countenance” and a “face”. Moreover, he highlights that the portrait is a fact of social art and it “most clearly conveys the idea that all facts of artistic awareness are dictated by being” [44, p. 15].

In contemporary Russian art, the portrait has seemingly “dissolved” in a stream of various artistic pursuits. As the examples of a traditional attitude towards the portrait genre, where the person portrayed is the center of the composition, which is the main point of attraction for the viewer, works by Z. K. Tsereteli, B. M. Nemensky, D. D. Zhilinsky, A. P. Tkachev, S. P. Tkachev, T. T. Salakhov, E. N. Shirokov and other artists can be mentioned [45]. Among the Saint Petersburg artists who were purposefully engaged in chamber portraiture in academic art, were E. E. Moiseenko, O. A. Eremeev, I. A. Razdrogin, A. A. Mylnikov. Many artists continue this tradition, among them are the following artists from Saint Petersburg: V. A. Lednev, A. N. Bliok, S. D. Kichko, Yu. V. Kalyuta, V. A. Mogilevtsev, V. V. Zagonek, V. L. Borovik, E. A. Zubov, A. K. Bystrov, G. Bernandsky, A. D. Lukashenok, A. N. Bazanov, and others [39].

Artists are still interested in the problem of a *chamber*, or *intimate* portrait associated with the expression of sincere feelings for the model. Often, these artworks have the sentiments of *passéism*. Academic school of painting stands out in this regard, where exemplary works of the genre can be found among Andrey Mylnikov’s creations: “Portrait (On The Way)”, “A Girl with Balls” (both — 2009) and the “Portrait” (2008), or the posthumous image, “Arisha” (2000), in which the characters seem to be immersed in a timeless environment, a ghostly and somehow fragile atmosphere [39].

Russian painting has a long-standing classical tradition in which the Renaissance view prevails, which is close to academic art. For example, L. N. Kirillova inherited the amazingly subtle ability to see and feel the person from her teacher, V. M. Oreshnikov, the prominent Soviet portrait painter. Hence Kirillova’s love for the portrait genre. She elevates her characters to the classical understanding of beauty, endowing them with beautiful Renaissance features. Some other artists, such as E. B. Romanova and T. S. Fedorova, also gravitate towards the Renaissance purity of portrait images in their art [39].

Realistic principles are often preserved in the portrait genre which is, in some way or the other, focused on depicting a person. Hence, a *type-portrait* that was formed in the 1920s — 1930s continues to exist. It was no longer focused on a person in the socialist society being built, but on their involvement in a particular social group. The typical character has certain recognizable features: emphasis is placed on his background, inner spiritual strength, which is based not so much on intellectual as on natural energy, active social position and creativity. Typical characters of Z. Tsereteli fascinate the viewer with their expression which combines the generalization of features, belonging to certain social groups, irony and good nature, conciseness of painting and individual resemblance (“Alík”, 2014, “Milya. Paradise”, 2009). Specific features of bright personalities interest Tsereteli no less when he paints his contemporaries, emphasizing their occupation or outstanding talents (“Andrey Bartenev”, 2010; “Tatyana Metaxa and Maria Vyazhevich”, 2010; “Mom Thea”, 2013, and others).

Saint Petersburg artist A.L. Ivanov creates large canvases with images of specific, recognizable models, and their main feature is generalization, monumentality, they are even somewhat poster-like. Such type portraits seem to be stripped of their psychological ambiguity, but they are well remembered for the acuteness of features. These paintings are rather like contemplations about fates of representatives from different generations: “Kirill” (2014), “Katya” (2015), “It’s All Ahead” (2016), “Villager” (2016), “Enigma” (all — tempera on canvas).

Children’s type portraits by T. Raush occupy a special place. The artist observes children and generalizes their features, placing them in a symbolic conventional space in which time seems to be slowed down, as if preventing the quick growth of children. The viewer can contemplate their faces, postures and states for a long time (“Two Sisters”, 2005; “Children on a Tree Stump”, 2015). These images are idealised and at the same time, devoid of beauty; they convey a sense of anxiety and unrest inherent in a child’s perception of the world.

Photography and cinema have greatly influenced contemporary painting. This topic calls for separate research. Often, artists deliberately refer to black and white photographs of the past from family albums to search for identity. Awareness of the tragic history of the country in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, one’s family history, the trial by memory, are present in the *historical “family portrait”*. The appeal in historical memory occurs as if by looking at pages from an old photo album (T. G. Nazarenko “Family Album”, 2010; “Remembering the Karpinsky’s”, 2010; A. B. Musaev “Old Photograph”, 1988). In G. P. Kichigin’s painting, “Grandfather’s Photo Album. A Ban on Memory” (2014), figures that had been cut out represent victims of repressions, revealing behind the “holes” a winter tundra landscape, the places of Stalin’s camps... A similar approach was used by I. V. Kolesnikov in his work “Gateways. Polyptych of 6 Parts” (2013) — six portraits of laughing people with open smiles drawn close-up with their eyes covered by coloured plates. It serves as a memory of obliterating names and faces, concealment, substitution and erasing memories about those repressed in Stalin’s time [46]. A similar problem of the relation to memory established in the USSR appears in the “Family Portrait. I Remember Nothing” by V. Lukka (2007).

Memory is connected not only with tragic pages of the past. Contemporary artists also are nostalgic about their childhood, painted with romantic moods. A massive six-part painting by Kh. V. Savkuev, “My Fellow Villagers” (400 × 450) can be classified as a large group portrait. It shows fellow villagers of the artist whom he remembers and loves, despite having left his homeland, Kabardino-Balkariya, a long time ago. Savkuev painted his elderly fellow countrymen, calling them by their real names. At the same time, he also creates generalized images of people who are indigenous to their land. In his images there are the same aching nostalgic intonations as in portraits by the American painter A. Wyeth.

P. Dolsky depicts nostalgia for high classical art, paying tribute to the Caravaggist tense painting with powerful light and shadow interplay, which is based on an illusory-accurate academic drawing and at the same time filled with symbolic moods and semantically complex. In the subject and style of his paintings of recent years, there is a tendency to combine Western European and Far Eastern artistic traditions (“Travelling Bard”, 2014; “Silver Morning”, 2017). The Saint Petersburg artist spent the difficult time of the pandemic in Wuhan, and attempted to capture his feeling about this period in his works (“Saving Life”, “Dedication to Wuhan Doctors”, 2020).

The family portrait is another important type of portrait painting. A. Kh. Kurbanov's portrait, the "Family" (2013) is painted according to the Renaissance image tradition in combination with elements of the *parsuna*, the early Russian painting genre, yet in a modern expressive manner. The artist used an original approach: he divided the composition into three parts each of which has a golden frame. Inside each, there are openly looking faces painted close-up, as close as possible to the viewer. These are the artist's self-portrait and portraits of his wife and son, painted with almost photographic accuracy; the faces appear as if from a looking glass, drawing us into some other world... [40, p. 58]. Another example of an artist who prefers the family portrait genre is A. A. Lyubavin. He reveals portrait and self-portrait images through the interior, the artist's atelier ("It's Snowing", 2017, oil on canvas).

At the same time, presently many commissioned works are created according to classical designs, in which celebrities and others (for example, business representatives) see themselves in the images of characters of past eras, when artists strive to please the customer referring to the iconographic types of ceremonial, semi-formal or chamber portraits. Among the artists who successfully worked in the genre are I. S. Glasunov, A. M. Shilov and N. S. Safronov. In these artworks, the models are idealized, made more beautiful and represented in the most flattering way to highlight their high social status. Such works take various forms of the *representative portrait*. As a rule, they have features of sublime nobility and inner spiritual generosity; the characters are endowed with strong charisma and a desire to serve the well-being of their Motherland and their people. These artworks are created in the traditional style of Russian formal portrait before the Revolution and portraits of the Soviet era "leaders". Usually, they are created for private collections, are not widely replicated, and are reminiscent of the recent craze of celebrities and the "very important persons" to acquire titles of nobility.

The formal representative portrait tradition continues in Russian painting. Some of these are portraits of contemporaries in which the person portrayed is placed against an official background that reveals the nature of their activities. (L. S. Khasyanova, the "Portrait of Irina Shchipina-Darminova", 2007). There are also formal portraits of historical personalities (A. Nikolaeva-Berg, "G. A. Spiridov", 2014).

The so-called *theatrical portrait* is close to the representative portrait type (A. M. Shilov, the "National Artist of Russia S. Shakurov as the Prince A. Menshikov", 2003). A special type of the theatrical portrait is a *portrait-role* — a depiction of a creative person at the moment of their stage performance or another creative transformation. One outstanding example is the portrait of M. Rostropovich by T. T. Salakhov (2000, GTG). It is an accurate portrait, psychological, representation that allows the immediate recognition of the great musician's image and communicates a sense of freedom of creative interpretation which is typical for both the artist and the painter. The author and his model match each other exactly in the painting.

*Historical portraits* also continue to play an important role. These are the portraits of famous personalities in history and culture (T. T. Salakhov, "The World of Salvador Dali" triptych, 2009; V. G. Mochalov, "Faina Ranevskaya", 2009). Sometimes familiar characters are represented in a comical way, which often manifests itself in the primitivist concept of the portrait genre (F. V. Volosenkov, "Poet and Muse", 2012).

Occasionally, the representative portrait in contemporary art is transformed into other forms, undergoing inversions of some kind. In the conditions of the postmodernist

paradigm, the representative portrait turns into a shape-shifting portrait which is often filled with irony, to the level of sarcasm. For example, V. Dubosarsky and A. Vinogradov create *pseudo-representative portraits-provocations* and *inversion portraits* in which famous historical personalities appear in an exaggerated way with satirical connotations. These are fantasies like “Warhol in Moscow” (2000), “Chancellor” (1996) or parodies on the classics of world painting “Obama on a Horse” (2009). These paintings overflow with combinations of elements of pseudo-realism, surrealism, *sots-art*, pop-art and kitsch. Working in a primitivist manner, “Mitki” artists develop a representative *parody portrait* (D. Shagin, “Won’t You Turn Down the Wick, It Smokes”, 2014).

Self-portrait continues to develop and both masters of realism and artists experimenting within the postmodern aesthetics turn to this genre. Contemporary researchers note that artists simultaneously subjectify and objectify an image through multiple mirrors or dubbing frames [47], which resembles a path from autobiography to self-portrait (see research dedicated to Agnes Varda). “In a self-portrait the duality inherent in the portrait is, as it were, raised to a degree: the artist represents himself (often using a mirror) as I in the Other, where the Other is portrait, and the I acts as a doubling of a doubling” [43, p. 22].

Some masters of Russian art made self-portrait their program genre. One of them is Yu. V. Kalyuta (“Self-Portrait. Father and Son”, 2019). Throughout his creative career the artist has been engaged in introspection, imagining himself in different situations and comparing himself with different heroes of the past and present. The most illustrative example is his “Dialogues on the Way” series of paintings (“Conversation on the Way”, 2016; “Don Quixote and Sancho Panza. Red and Black”, 2016) [48].

In Anatoly Lyubavin’s paintings, portrait images are often presented in interiors. These chamber paintings evoke a lyrical mood full of lyricism and inner feelings. Even his self-portraits of the pandemic period, while getting more unsettling, are devoid of tragedy and hopelessness (“Self-Isolation”, 2020). Harmony of the inner and outer world is typical for this artist. His imaginative world is closed up in his workshop space and only sometimes breaks through outwardly, literally through the walls or ceiling of the house (“Solo on a Cello. Self-Portrait”, “Solo on a Cello”, 2020).

Self-portraiture is common to many contemporary authors, and T. Nazarenko has a special place among them. In her artworks, contemporary feminist, gender and existential perspectives are acutely intertwined (“A Circus Woman”, 1984; “A Woman and The Birds”, 2016). Sometimes, the authors “try on” different eras (G. Guryanov, “Self-Portrait”, 1993; O. Tobreluts (From “Empire Reflections” series, 1994), or characters (V. Tikhomirov, “Self-Portraits as Heroes”, 2007); they wear and drop masks, start dialogues with artists of different eras (V. N. Korbakov “Self-Portrait without a Mask”, 2009; “Spanish Artists Visiting My Place”, 2001), and engage in self-irony (N. Sazhin “Moydodyr”, 1982; V. Lukka “The Hermit. Icon Self-Portrait”, 1992). Sometimes in the process of self-analysis, their irony reaches the level of sarcasm and self-deprecation. (V. Lyapkalo, evidently fascinated by L. Freud’s images, on an “import substitution” platform) [49; 50].

Sometimes the artists do not see faces as important at all and they hide them by turning away or covering them with hands or replacing the image of a person with their presence, or their clothes in which artists work on their canvases in a workshop, gradually turning it into the “*art object portrait*” (Yu. Broytman “Self-Portrait”, 1998; V. S. Mikhaylov



“Trousers”, 2006) or showing themselves entirely naked and with their faces erased “face-off” (V. Lukka “Hellenistic Self-Portrait”, 2008).

Self-portrait is the most widespread genre in contemporary art. The authors of the “My Self” exhibition at the Russian Museum traced its evolution from self-portrait to selfie, commenting as follows: “Today the self-portrait genre is closer and more relatable than it was forty years ago: by constructing our account-avatar, we “paint” the self-portrait of modern times” [51, p. 11]. Indeed, a selfie is a widespread self-portrait type in our time. It allows to examine one’s face at close range, experimenting with it. To give an example, the Saint Petersburg based artist D. Kollegova creates a desperately destructive series of selfie self-portraits and likewise merciless portraits of her acquaintances during the pandemic.

According to experts, “in the digital aesthetics of the post-celluloid period the viewer enters into a direct contact with the ‘mirror reflection’ of a self-portrait’s creator, that is, like he symbolically rejects the artist’s intermediating service” [32]. This is why the artist requires less and less attributes connecting him with the occupation. A selfie is in a way a double, a shape-shifter, which does not require artistic interpretation (“Selfie”, a film by N. Khomerika, 2018).

Contemporary art returns to theoretical developments of modernism and avant-garde, often filling established concepts with new meanings. For instance, researcher Vera Lagutenkova has defined two portrait types that are new for the 20<sup>th</sup> — beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries — the “*still life portrait*” and “*face-off*” portrait, or a portrait-mask [35; 36]. Principles of such portrait types go back to the formulations of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1927 K. Malevich stated in his essay “Suprematism”: “not a single work that depicts a face depicts a person, it depicts just a mask through which one or another imageless sensation flows, and that what we call a person will tomorrow be a beast, and the day after tomorrow an angel — it will depend on one or another sensation of being” [52, p. 357].

History of art demonstrates that the human face can be filled with any content. In her research, V. Lagutenkova provides examples of works by V. Dubosarsky and A. Vinogradov, M. Safronova, Banksy (street art), Danjel Cavens (performance); digital art of Rica Barba, and others [36, p. 5–6]. Contemporary painters experiment in a hybrid way, combining portrait with another genre. For example, the opposite of portrait, still life, often becomes a “holder” of a portrait image. *Portraits-countenances* by Vic (V. Yu. Zabelin) of the 2010s are compositionally complex; the artist uses multiple details to reveal his characters’ occupations, the wealth of their inner worlds, the complexity of their natures. It is like he returned to the traditions of Cubo-Futurism but in a softened, narrative manner (portraits of S. Kuryokhin, V. Krivulin, T. Novikov, all dated 2014). Such techniques of simultaneity allow to expand the scope of reflection on the meaning of human life.

Cultural scientists offer new classifications of the portrait genre emerging from modernist concepts. For instance, E. N. Mankovskaya suggested the term “*existentialist portrait*” [29], defining its qualities as, in modernist art, “the dramatically tragic outlook inherent in high modernism as such could be expressed “until complete death in earnest” [29, p. 109]. Contemporary Russian artists draw mental parallels with the art of E. Munch, E. Schiele and F. Bacon. Existential experiences can be observed, for example, in art by A. Zaslavsky, T. Nazarenko (“Goodbye”, 2013), I. Novikov (“A Nice Guy. Eden”, 2018) [53]. Our contemporaries continue to contemplate human existence and earthly paths of men. In his art, A. V. Tyshchenko turned to images of elderly people. Old age to him means not only wisdom and reassurance, but also passion. This is especially relevant

for creative people obsessed with their ideas until the last days (“Portrait of the Artist V. F. Rudnev”, 2015).

The connection with existentialism is also found in art practices. For example, E. N. Mankovskaya refers to the Serbian artist Marina Abramović’s performances as “the bodily simulacra of the existential and sacred <...> the themes of death and sex are played up in a naturalistic way (manipulations with beef bones, ritual intercourses with the earth etc.” [29, p. 117]. Video-artists have also devoted attention to the portrait genre, as evidenced by the exhibition of B. Viola at the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts. Portraits appear in performances by Russian artists such as O. Kulik and P. Pavlensky. In 2017, P. Dubchinskaya created a performance called “paroles: paroles” at the “Performance: New Forms of Presence” symposium held at the Museum of the Academy of Arts and the I. E. Repin Institute. The mise-en-scène for the performance includes the simultaneous presence of the real artist and her video image. Interpreter twins read the same text aloud in Russian and French. According to the author’s concept, “this performance can be seen as a simultaneous demonstration of both identities of a character without an identity” [54, p. 111].

It is not surprising that artists of the latest art trends pay close attention to portraiture. They change the genre and greatly transform it by using principles of destruction. Nevertheless, one of the main and most acute problems of our time is the return of humanity into art.

Some of the artists creating street art, which is developing rapidly in Russia, deliberately turn to photo real *urban* portrait (which belongs to street art). For example, the HoodGraff collective represented by Artyom Burge and Ilya create giant portraits of famous people in urban spaces a la Chuck Close but without pixels. Their artworks are not original in terms of creating images. They develop iconographies using famous photos or paintings imitating graphic manner to achieve a photographic likeness of the portraits which delights the public. Travelling the world, HoodGruff create their works in different cities: portraits of S. Bodrov and V. Tsoi (Saint Petersburg, 2014), John Lennon (Prague), V. Gergiev (Vladikavkaz), I. Repin (Haifa, Israel, 2019), and P. Picasso (Barcelona, 2019). Despite the outward resemblance to well-known models, these works depart from the portrait genre, taking away the individuality of the unique personalities depicted, turning them into some “signs” which resemble huge advertising posters.

However, contemporary artists of different countries perceive that a human must return to art. It is not by coincidence that during the pandemic a year ago, the largest collection of portraits in Britain, the National Portrait Gallery, announced the launch of a large project — the “Hold Still”. This artwork creates a collective portrait of Great Britain during self-isolation. Authors of the project “invited people of all ages to send a photo portrait. The selected portraits present a unique review of an important period of history for all of us. From virtual birthday parties <...> to brave National Health Service employees, resilient keyworkers and people suffering from illness, isolation and loss” [17]. The project also resulted in the publication of an album with the best photo portraits [55]. It is noteworthy that in such an extraordinary time, people who are average at first glance, the people doing their everyday job, sacrificing themselves for the sake of those close to them, giving birth and raising children, became heroes of the portrait genre. The simplest actions in this period turned into heroic acts of bravery. The pandemic challenge showed that the human in modern people remains in the forefront which is usually noted by researchers of the portrait genre in the work of old masters [56]. Remarkably, the

interactive forms of museum presentation and social networks were at the avant-garde of a new social movement reflecting today's events.

In conclusion, it can be said that the contemporary portrait genre in Russian painting is experiencing certain difficulties. It has been dissolved in many different trends and forms of art. By actively reworking achievements of world culture, in some aspects, it has remained very conservative following the realistic tradition, and in others it has moved wildly to the extremes of contemporary art. Still, certain changes that have taken place are noteworthy, which is reflected in the expansion of the portrait typology, its stylistics and semantic. It may be that this genre is on the verge of new discoveries, becoming more diverse and striving to address many issues of modern times.

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