

Russian arrière-garde

Looking at a sealed package with a portrait of the moustachioed milkman, or genuine babushka, we agree to think that the low-fat, probiotic yogurt inside really was made in the village. Hardly anyone will be disappointed or surprised that the milk for the yogurt was milked not by lively milkmaids but by sullen milking machine operators. The bundle of agricultural products and the image of the province are very conventional.

Folk art has a wonderful quality – it translates the image of the province in all of these things which are made for us in the hinterland, even if they were actually made in the nearby industrial area. In this sense, the hinterland is a place where “folk art” is made.

Perhaps there is the same situation with “contemporary art” - it marks the centre. Although the suggested opposition of contemporary art and folk art is not as obvious as it may seem. Of course this equalisation of the contemporary art and folk is possible only through simplification of both. However, contemporary art and folk art (as art not as a pattern or a motif) are equally marginal in their relation to the overall pop culture, and in this sense they are strategic allies.

Contemporary art has something to learn from folk and there is something which folk art can borrow from the practice of contemporary art. If contemporary art is the vanguard, folk art is the rearguard of contemporary culture.



Fig. 1. Members of the feminist “Pussy Riot” group stressed that their radical performances are allowed, not only in terms of secular morality, but also because the image of folk culture, as described by the Russian semiotician Mikhail Bakhtin, focuses on the grotesque and the carnivalesque aspects of “folkness”.



Fig. 2. The Russian pavilion at Expo-2010. The “Buyan-Grad” project (the mythical city from Russian legend).

“Narod’s”

Folk art in Russian sounds like “narodnoe iskusstvo” (“*narod’s* art”). What is “folk art”? The fact is that the word “*narod’s*” in Russian can have a variety of meanings, which do not exclude one another:

- “Ethnic”: which belongs to any particular nation or ethnic group.
- “Popular”: which has obvious value for a large number of people. The Stalinist tradition of giving the title of “People’s Artist” to popular performing artists (“*narod’s* artist”) still exists in Russia today.
- “National”: a word which combines the nation as a political and a cultural entity. Vladimir Putin’s “All-Russian people’s front” (“*narod’s* front”), is an example of this.
- “People’s”: which refers to Soviet times. For instance the “people’s commissars” (“*narod’s* commissars”).

So many “folk”

So if we agree that with the word “*narod’s*” we mean “folk”, we still cannot avoid controversy, since in itself the image of folk is not definite.

One might say that “folk culture” is kokoshniki, chastushki and dance squatting, while another person will stress the grotesque and the carnivalesque aspects, and a third will point that real “folk” are the righteous and the Orthodox.

Conceptual confusion is not only a consequence of the objective characteristics of the Russian language, but also the result of the theoretical debate about the “folkness” (*narodnost*, nationality etc.), which transfers to legal and common language.

“Folk” and “contemporary”

There is an abyss between “contemporary art” and “contemporary folk art”, which calls into question the very possibility of the existence of the second one. The fact is that the concept of “contemporariness” as well as “folkness” is not neutral, but implies that the figure of contemporary culture shares a number of ideological positions.

The very existence of contemporary art in Russia is often considered a sign of modernization of Russian society and its “European” character. Paradoxically, it is often the examples of folk art that are used to represent Russian culture abroad.

Folk art as it is



Fig. 3. Palekh icon "Transfiguration", the middle of the 18th century. Palekh icons were made according to the traditions of Vladimir-Suzdal icon painting school with a lot of small images.



Fig. 4. The Court of the pioneers of Baba Yaga, 1920s

In 1922 the iconographer Ivan Golikov saw in the Kustar museum in Moscow, lacquer boxes of Fedoskino (Moscow oblast). He decided that the Palekh artists could also create miniatures on products made from papier-mâché and so the icon painting technique of egg tempera has been saved. This is a unique example.

In 1923 upon the initiative of the art historian A.V. Bakushinskii attempts were made to paint based on the themes of the Russian folk tales. Besides fairy stories Palekh masters began to refer to everyday life. Later Palekh lacquer miniatures became a powerful tool of Soviet propaganda.

Discourse diversity

The phenomenon which we call "folk art" can be described using three terms: folk art (for evaluation of the outstanding examples of art), folk artistic trades (as a formal term for industry of art production) and people's creativity (for amateur art).

Although a consumer does not care about these issues, these word games often have a significant impact on the fate of trade, enterprises and even the appearance of products. Generally this is an example of how art-history studies can become the basis for a legislative system.

"Brand"

There are numerous folk art "brands" which are the results of a unique combination of several principal positions: material, technique, location, motif and producer. Changing each of these parameters can call into question the traditional character of folk art, its authenticity, but paradoxically these changes also allow us to develop art and its traditions.

Material

Material is the basis for folk art. Craft and trade emergence in a certain area is primarily a consequence of the fact that there is something of what to do such things. There are nine basic materials: wood, bone, horn, stone, metal, ceramics, glass, leather, and textiles.

Technique

The material dictates what artistic treatment is possible. Improvement in technology in a certain area conflicts with the ideology of preservation of traditional crafts. Each craft has its inner "restrictions" on improvement, and this is its principal distinguishing features.

Location

There is currently a concept of "a place where a trade traditionally exists," which is governed by two laws: "On the folk artistic trades" and "On the protection of cultural heritage". This means that traditional "folk art" was invented in a specific place (which is specially preserved, legally not factually) and is performed there. Experts note that if a master changes his residence, especially to move from the countryside to the city, it affects not only the authenticity, but also the quality of the art.

Motif

The motif, characteristic for a certain "brand" of folk art, is a major source of recognition. It seems that the motif should be kept in the most zealous manner. Surprisingly, almost all best-known folk art "brands" through their history had several stylistic phases. The change of style is always paradoxical. Even the "return" to the already forgotten, and the more traditional and seemingly more "authentic" style is perceived as an innovation in relation to the familiar, but from a historical point of view is a "non-authentic" style.

Variability and the ability to change is the existential condition of folk art. However, there is no folk art in general, and there is no universal principle possible in relation to its changeability.



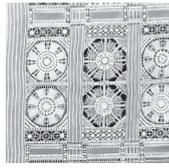
1 - Lomonosov porcelain



2 - Kargopol painting



3 - Velikii Ustyug patterns



4 - Krestets stitch



5 - Torzhok golden embroidery



6 - Rostov enamel



7 - Zhostovo painting



8 - Nothern niello



9 - Pavlovo-Posad kerchief



10 - Gzhel porcelain



11 - Dyatkovo cut glass



12 - Bogorod wood carving



13 - Fedoskino lacquer miniature



14 - Mstera lacquer miniature



15 - Shakhunia weaving



16 - Palekh lacquer miniature



17 - Skopin ceramics



18 - Elets lace



19 - Gus' Khru-stalny cut glass



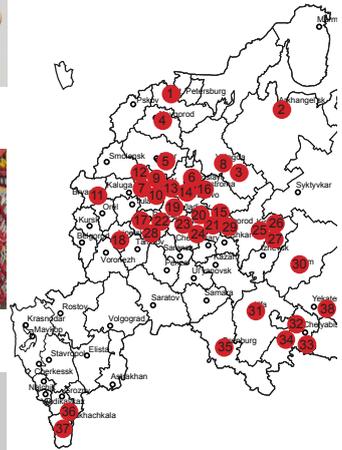
20 - Khokhloma painting



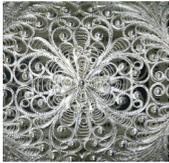
21 - Semenov matreshka



22 - Mikhailov lace



23 - Gorodets golden embroidery



24 - Kazakovo filigree



25 - Dymkovo toys



26 - Vyatka straw



27 - Vyatka burl



28 - Kadom veniz



29 - Gorodets painting



30 - Ural stone carving



31 - Agidel



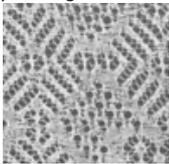
32 - Zlatoust steel engraving



33 - Kaslin casts



34 - Ural bronze



35 - Orenburg kerchief



36 - Kubachi silver



37 - Dagestan carpets



38 - Nizhny Tagil trays

Historically, the production of decorative and applied art evolved in those regions of Russia where agricultural production was low and could not survive. The most famous folk artistic trades are situated in the non-black soil areas of European Russia. Therefore, support for crafts in these areas at all times was a way to generate rural employment. Some workshops, which are now referred to as folk artistic crafts, emerged as side-production of large industrial enterprises. These include a number of crafts of the Southern Urals (Zlatoust steel engraving (32), Kaslin casts (33), Ural bronze (34), Nizhny Tagil tray painting (38)). However, there are examples where the formation of a particular trade is not due to "natural" reasons.



39 - Siberian carpets



40 - Tomsk birch bark



41 - Turina Gora ceramics



42 - Magadan bone carving



43 - Uelen bone carving



Paradoxes of state support

The enterprise of folk artistic trades “Turina Gora” (41, Barnaul) may be considered an exception. Artistic production was founded here only in 1988 on the basis of a brick factory. “At the core of our products is not the tradition preserved and transmitted from generation to generation, but the creative originality of the artistic vision and thinking of every master,” according to the official website. This does not prevent “Turina Gora” from receiving subsidies from the federal budget along with other far more historically authentic enterprises.

Khokhloma propagation

The most remarkable example of the “migration” of trades is the “reproduction” of “golden khokhloma” (20) in the 1970s. After some government initiatives to support the folk artistic trades in the 1960s, numerous workshops began to appear, with shops and entire plants virtually created from scratch. The official birthplace of khokhloma is Nizhny Nograd oblast, in the Semenov region. Masters from Semenov moved to other regions and organized there training and production of khokhloma products. However, there were also occasions when production was organized without direct continuity.



In the Kursk khokhloma there are more pictures of berries, lush flowers, some wild flowers and poppies. There is an abundance of greenery. It is substantially brighter than the original khokhloma and has something in common with the colour of the South Russian folk costumes, and Kursk carpets.



The popularity of Bashkir khokhloma is largely explained by the successful solution of the art problem to build a harmonious national ornament, using the technique of khokhloma painting.



In addition to four dogmatic colours (red, black, yellow and green) Lipetsk masters use murals, emerald green, purple, and azure. Experts note that the style has features of eclecticism and imitation of enamels, as well as the features of pseudo-Russian style of the late 19th century.



Spoon of the “Kuzovatovo khokhloma” which was presented to my parents for their wedding in 1978.

Local artists imitated khokhloma without any direct continuity. This “khokhloma” appears closer to the Lipetsk example.



Arts and crafts

The position of the artist

Despite the suggested opposition between contemporary and folk (traditional) culture - artists (masters) are in very similar situations. An artist does not seem quite belong to himself; his identity is mediated by the opinion of the expert and professional community. It is they who determine the eligibility for inclusion of the author to the appropriate art. In both cases the expression of the artist's individuality is limited by the value criteria.

“To enter the world of contemporary art, he (the artist) must swear allegiance to the internal fire of destruction that burns in the “Black Square“ of Malevich. If he (or she) cannot do it, nothing will happen, and I do not mean a great career - he just won't be recognized as our own. In fact, whether a person accepts Malevich or not is impossible to imitate. It is very evident, irrespective of field and form the person may work in, and it is this that separates our world from foreigners.”

Ekaterina Degot, the influential art historian, curator and critic, an expert on the art of the 20th and 21st centuries, corresponding member of Russian Academy of Arts.

“The artist - in himself and, even more in the students - must educate the knowledge of qualities of artistic language, the qualities of the art school traditions, which have a value aim and an ideal. To achieve this, it is important to perceive the Words of folk art - not from the scholasticism of academic coaching, not from the scholasticist presentation of himself as an artist, inventing something new, but from the tradition of the folk understanding of the world, from the essence of folk art that requires not only knowledge of the subtleties of techniques but of faith, prayer, dialogue with God, and dialogue with tradition”.

Maria Nekrasova, the influential art historian, an expert and popularizer of folk art, and full member of the Russian Academy of Arts



Fig. 5. “The high school of folk art (institute)” in St. Petersburg was founded in 1911 under the patronage of Empress Aleksandra Fedorovna. In the Soviet era it was moved to Moscow, where the school developed into a strong educational institution. On the initiative of Ludmila Putina the school was reestablished in St. Petersburg in 2003. Many of the teachers were specially moved from Moscow to St Petersburg.

15 crafts are being taught here by teachers - masters from the relevant places or graduates. The students are mainly from the regions. A small number of graduates returned to work in the regions. There are 2 official branches, and 6 branches which are unofficial.

Contemporary art expert opinion is converted into critical reviews, the invitation to participate in exhibitions, awards, grants, and, eventually, into symbolic and literal capitalization.

Expert opinion of folk art is even more crucial. According to the law, products of folk art whose artistic merit is recognized by official expert councils in the regions and the Ministry of Economical development and Trade, are exempt from VAT, and the enterprise or workshop that produce these items, is able to participate in state assistance programs.

The education issue

Of course, expert opinion is not exhaustive, as the end consumer is not an expert but a person. However, it is the expert community that determines the educational policy, which has a determining character.

The ideal in both arts is not only and not primarily the transfer of the craft skills but the raising of a special kind of thinking. Contemporary art can come close to this ideal, while there are several schools of this new type. Folk art, despite all the talk, generally today is taught using outdated Soviet methods. If previously the greater part of this folk art education was situated in the places of the existence of the trade allowing the artists to “absorb” the “genius loci”, now the balance has shifted in the direction of Moscow and St. Petersburg. Furthermore the image of “folk” remains uncertain, and the image proposed by theorists is too fundamentalist in nature. Now the trend is that the time given to the study of “folk culture” (on behalf of which the master has to speak) is reduced in the educational programs.

It seems that folk art can learn from the flexibility of contemporary art and its problematic nature of education. Especially because the avant-garde postulate of German artist Joseph Beuys “Everyone is an artist” - formulated in the 1970s, is a truism for folk art.

Exchange

Professional art (actual in specific periods), and folk art (in the broadest sense) have never been in isolation from each other, and have always been part of the same cultural process. The history of mutual influence - both direct and indirect - is rich and varied.

“In this extraordinary hut I first encountered the miracle that became subsequently one of the elements of my work. It was here that I learnt not to look at the picture from the side, but to revolve in the picture myself, to live in it. I can remember vividly stopping on the threshold of this amazing spectacle. The table, the benches, the stove so imperious and so huge, the closets, the sideboards - everything had been painted with multi-coloured and bold ornaments”



Fig. 6. Permogorskaya painting. Fragment of painting on burak, the middle of the XIX century.



Fig. 7. Wassily Kandinsky Improvisation, 1917-1918

Wassily Kandinsky, 1918. The artist writes about his expedition to Vologda gubernia in 1889, when he was a law student.

“The simple, unsophisticated beauty of the lubok, the severity of the primitive, the mechanical precision of construction, the nobility of style, and good colour brought together by the creative ... our password and our slogan”



Fig. 8. Lubok. Baba Yaga is going to fight with the crocodile, XVIII century.



Fig. 9. Natalia Goncharova Automobile, 1913-1914.

Alexander Shevchenko, 1913. The artist explains the influence of folk “lubok” art on the neo-primitivism movement.



Fig. 10. Alexei Tsvetkov Born house of matryoshka, 2009 The image of the “folk toy” matryoshka doll is contrasted with Barbie which Tsvetkov put in a coffin.



Fig. 11. Andrey Lyublinsky Matreshkas “Pussy Riot” 2012 The artist uses a matryoshka (the image of a Russian woman) to support the feminist group “Pussy Riot”, which is facing criminal prosecution.



Fig. 12. Valery Korchagin U-2, Go to grandfather, Hot trunk, 2003 The tray was made as part of the project “Everyday Camouflage - Tagil tray”, the curators - Yevgeny Umansky, Oleg Blyabiyas, Julia Gnirenko. According to sketches of contemporary artists the trays were made in the traditional Nizhny Tagil technique of hand wrist painting. The project reflects on the origins of Nizhny Tagil tray, which appeared as a side trade for workers of the weapons factory in the early 18th century. At the end of the project there was a charity auction held in Moscow, and the collected money went to support the Nizhny Tagil trade.



Fig. 13. Alexei Belyaev-Guintovt We will take everything back, 2008 The artist uses Pavlovo-Posad shawl as a symbol of his traditionalist position.

Artists use folk art images and motifs with a variety of purposes. They can refer to “the spirit” of folk art, and can reflect on the social symbolism, playing with various aspects of the “folkness”. In this sense folk art is understood as part of popular culture, which is a common source of inspiration for contemporary art. There is an opportunity to enrich art with a deeper problematization of the folk art issues.

Support / impact

The influence of professional art in folk art is for the most part within the state and private support programs. In addition to the declarative statements about the need to learn from folk art, often the pathos of a professional artist aims at education, enrichment and improvement of techniques, motifs and forms of folk art. There are two opposing positions on this matter, which were fully articulated at the beginning of the 20th century. One allows and encourages this influence often to “increase consumer quality” of products. The other insists that this barbaric approach, which leads to a loss of identity, but allow professional pursuit for “revival, preservation and development of traditions”. One might say that in practice the scientific sub-basis of folk artists is proof of compliance with tradition, but this raises questions about the internal authenticity of the arts.

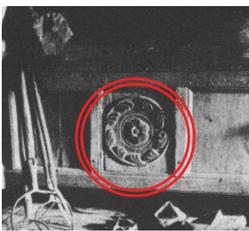


Fig. 14. Interior of a peasant hut, photo probably taken by Elena Polenova, 1880.



Fig. 15. Bedside table with rosette motifs, designed by Elena Polenova, the late 1880.

Who does not know that before the zemstvo's promotion of kustars, their products were crude, tasteless, ugly, wrong, and fragile. On the other hand everyone now, perhaps cultural Muscovites, knows that in the Leontievsky Lane in Moscow is located zemstvo's “Kustar Museum”, as it contains the most varied collection of highly original and very elegant handicrafts.

Noviy Kolos, newspaper. Moscow, 1914

In the early 1880s, the wife of the industrialist S. Mamontov organized a turning and wood carving workshop, in the Moscow region estate of Abramtsevo to prevent the extinction of rural culture. From 1885 to 1892 a workshop was led by the artist E. Polenova, who designed a lot of furniture pieces according to motifs from nearby peasants' houses.

In 1885 on the initiative of the Moscow provincial zemstvo (municipal government) to support kustar (small-scale, cottage) industry, a Commercial and industrial museum of kustar 'products was opened. The museum had three departments: marketing (research and support), art and methodological (Museum of models for kustar production), a bureau for support of handicraft industry. Leading artists collaborated with the museum. By 1917, 13 more such museums were opened in other cities. In 1941, the leading experts on folk art on the basis of the Kustar museum formed the Research Institute of Art Industry. The Institute functioned within the structure of Ministry of local Industry (1934-1957), which was engaged in the development of folk artistic trades, as well as other types of facilities in remote and rural areas. By 1998, when the Institute was closed, the staff (art historians, artists, engineers) would have worked with all the trades. The Modern image of most “brands” of folk art is the achievement of the Institute. The impact of this work is not always estimated positively, but it is undeniable that the ethnographic expedition conducted by the Institute, allowed them to collect a lot of data about folk art. The work which was carried out by the Institute, was not only focused on the “improvement” of crafts, but also to revive the already completely forgotten folk arts.



Fig. 16. Doll of Furukuma which was probably the prototype of the first matryoshka.



Fig. 17. Copy of the first matryoshka (1899-1900), probably painted according to Sergey Malyutin's sketches.

The first matryoshka was made in the workshop of merchant A. Mamontov. The considered official author is the turner, V.P. Zvezdochkin, who invented the form. There is a legend that the author of the painting is a famous artist S. Malyutin, but Zvezdochkin did not mention Malyutin's participation in his memoirs.



Fig. 18. Gzhel. Kvasnik, XVIII century.



Fig. 19. N. Bessarabova. Pitcher, 1950s.



Fig. 20. T.S. Dunashova. Sugar Bowl, 1972

Current look of Gzhel ceramics (cobalt painting, shadow swab) invented in 1950s by the professional artist Natalia Bessarabova and art historian A.B. Saltykov, who worked in Research institute of art industry. They based their ideas of scientific and even archeological data, but the motif invented is new.

After 1991 there were a series of bankruptcies of large Soviet folk artistic trade enterprises (there is only 1/3 left). It is believed that this was also linked with the emergence of many manufacturers whose products competed with the "traditional industries". However, bankruptcy continues 20 years later, suggesting that there are more substantial reasons for this. Large enterprises - the heirs of the Soviet giants - are often unable to maintain the infrastructure created in the 1970s. It is excessive for today's production volumes, but the government continues to support these enterprises. At the same time, according to some reports, the number of folk artistic trades enterprises has increased in recent years, probably this is a reference to the smaller enterprises.



Fig. 21. Nikolai Polisskiy
Perm Gate, 2011

A project for the development of contemporary culture (art, music, theatre) as a resource for creating more comfortable living conditions and keeping people from moving to another regions was created in the Perm krai.

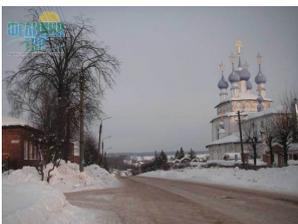


Fig. 22. The popularity of Palekh art has virtually no effect on the Palekh settlement itself. Palekh is still a village. Although the population has doubled, almost every resident is in some way associated with artistic production. The embroidery factory, flax mill, milk farm, brick factory, vegetable drying plant have all ceased to exist. The public baths was also closed, but there are four museums and two hotels.

Issue of support

Since 1992 there has been a federal organisation called the "National Center for Contemporary Art" with several branches in some regions. However, for a long time contemporary art developed through the support of foreign foundations. In the 1990-2000s period commercial galleries were the basis of the institutionalization of contemporary art. Now the development of art has moved from galleries to private nonprofit foundations. Former galleries were reformatted into this framework. Now the question of the possible support from the state arose, and this issue has also become a topic of debates. Private institutions are not opposed to government support, if there is no censorship.

Enterprises of folk artistic trades (both large and small) are now in private hands, and the supporting efforts of the state are aimed towards them. This practice is based on the equalization of folk art and the folk artistic crafts industry. Owners of enterprises are not very interested in scientific research and other nonprofit activities. In addition, owners of the enterprises often do not have enough resources. Large companies with state participation provide sponsorship of fairs and festivals, but there are no private foundations for the support of artists.

Industry of art

Since the 2000s there has been a focus on the relationship between contemporary art and the so-called "creative industries" (design, consulting, fashion, PR, event management, etc.). This comparison is not quite obvious, but contemporary art is now often perceived as a subspecies of the creative industries, or as a resource for their development.

Folk art is historically closely connected with the industry of folk artistic trades. It has a complex and diverse character, from industrial enterprise to small workshops. It is generally accepted that the master of folk art in isolation from the industry loses his connection with the alleged tradition, and the industry, lacking prominent artists, fall into replication. Often this intimacy leads to the fact that folk art is reduced to a folk artistic trades industry. The business becomes the protagonist, and not the artist.

Tool for regional development

Today, regional authorities have begun to realize the potential for regional development that lies in contemporary art. It is more about leisure and the ability to push the viewer to non-trivial creative solutions and ideas. These attempts became a new issue for contemporary art in Russia, and were not always positively received by the artists and the professional community.

Folk art from the late 19th century is constantly in a situation where it is used for regional development. All these practices were accompanied by theoretical discussions, which tried to find the optimal combination between the intensive support of art from the state, involving more people in the occupation of folk art, and its inevitable transformation into a decorative art, souvenir and amateurishness.

Nikola-Lenivets case

The dying village of Nikola-Lenivets (in the Kaluga oblast) became known all over the world thanks to installations and land-art objects of the artist Nikolay Polisskiy, which were made in conjunction with local residents. Before getting into Nikola-Lenivets, Polisskiy never made installations, and the local people, who now feel like artists, have never been before involved in art. Now art is a kind of a local trade. Since 2006, the festival "Arch-Stoyanie" has taken place in Nikola-Lenivets. It actively involves Russian private and international and regional funding. This is an example of regional development, based on nontrivial cooperation between contemporary art and "folk" spirit.



Fig. 23. Nikolay Polisskiy
Border of The Empire, 2007

Trade and trade



Fig. 24. Press Conference on termination of galleries' commercial activity Moscow, 2012

Three key contemporary art galleries closed in Moscow. Because on the one hand it became harder to generate income (as in the 1990s), but it is also no longer necessary to pretend that they are engaged in commercial activity. The development of art moved from galleries to private nonprofit foundations. The former galleries have been reformatted into this new framework.



Fig. 25. Exhibition-fair of folk artistic trades of Russia "Ladia - 2011. Winter fairy tale". Not only traditional trades but also lot of amateur art.



Fig. 26. Art flea market St. Petersburg, 2009.

A flea market is a way of organizing the exhibition space and the shape of the interaction between artist and viewer. Artists present their work for public display, for selling and exchange. The purpose of a one-day fair is to get away from the established framework of representation of contemporary art, and was done together with well-known contemporary artists and amateurs.

The state supports either folk artistic trades or "people's amateurishness". The state tends to be interested either in leisure activities and alternative employment for rural areas (and therefore pushing the art into accessible for people's amateurishness) or in reducing costs (and therefore pushing art onto the market).

The problem of the influence of the market, which is widely discussed today within the Russian contemporary art scene, has recently become topical. Questions such as "a piece of art as commodity", "the artist as entrepreneur" and others acquired a particular importance after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In Soviet conditions the ideological and formal loyalty of the artist was successfully exchanged for state guarantees, and nonconformity came on demand from the professional community. New circumstances have led artists to seek their own unique combination of popularity (the clarity and proximity to a potential customer, in this case), format (formal characteristics of "contemporary art" and its ideological component) and authenticity (correspondence with author's unique language).

At the same time, the market for contemporary art in Russia is still undeveloped. Perhaps the reason for this is not that people are not willing to spend money, but because they do not see art as something that can be bought. People have got used to perceive contemporary art at exhibitions only.

All these issues are addressed towards folk art in almost the same way. But the most obvious difference is that the objects of folk art were operating under market conditions throughout their history. Moreover, "folk artistic trades" historically and by definition, were aimed at the production of goods. The folk artist is also finds himself within the collision described, but he cannot hope to receive aid from non-profit foundations because of their absence. Even the late soviet era maintained such a kind of system.

From the beginning of the 1990s, much has been said that handicrafts cannot withstand the pressure of Chinese fakes. But how does a consumer receive "real" folk art?

It is difficult to imagine a folk art exhibition which does not look like a fair. One could argue that it is a traditional form for the exhibition of folk art. But this is not the case; the fair has never been stifling bazaars and folk art is never divorced from the wider cultural context. This phenomenon is very recent.

The problem of competition with Chinese goods with motifs of folk art, or poor-quality samples of Russian crafts, is not in high production cost of folk art products. The consumer perceives the folk art exclusively as a commodity, and the deciding factor for him is the price. The consumer looks at the product without history, without values, without context. In this sense, for a consumer there is no difference between an original and a fake, he always sees something that reminds him of something else. In this sense, he always sees a fake. The value side of folk art to the customer turns out to be insignificant, he can not opt for the best.

The solution to this problem lies not in boring education or state protectionism. Changes of patterns, shapes, types of products will hardly help - it's not the problem. **The question is how to add the status of art to folk art. This is quite a non-trivial task, and may be formulated by contemporary art. The development of the tradition goes through its problematization, and that is the hallmark of contemporary art, which is often forgotten by arts' developers.**