

Natural scenery and hydro-meteorological phenomena in Russian landscape painting

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Landscape occupies a special place in Russian painting. For the first time, schematically transferred landscape motives appeared in ancient iconography. In the ancient icons, the figures of Christ, the Virgin, the saints and angels were depicted sometimes in the background of very schematic scenery. Sparse trees, which species could not be determined precisely, symbolized the forest; buildings, without any volumes, were temples and chambers. However the landscape painting did not exist actually as a separate genre of easel painting in Russia until the 18th century. In the 18th century landscapes were used as a background in the state and home portraits. Vladimir Borovikovsky, for instance, depicted his images on the background of Russian nature. The first sceneries, which appeared in Russia in the 18th century, were topographical views of imperial palaces and parks by Semen Shchedrin. He can rightly be called the founder of Russian landscape painting, although his works were generally decorative. Working with real nature, the study of Italian nature and the discovery of original Russian national landscape - these are the three directions of developing of the Russian landscape painting in the first half of the 19th century. Sylvester Shchedrin, Mikhail Lebedev, Alexander Ivanov developed a tradition of Romantic painting, which based in the Russian landscape painting, similar to the European landscape painting, on the working with real nature in the open air (plein-air painting). With discovering the sea, the Russian art of the 19th century was developing such popular type of landscape painting as a Marine art. In seascapes, tradition of Romanticism is living, which inspired creativity of the famous Russian Romantic painter Ivan Aivazovsky. He is considered one of the greatest marine artists in history. The artist has developed his own individual painting style, in which there are no strict classic rules of composition. Aivazovsky painted sea as a living matter and was able to convey such effects as of moving water, of reflected sun and moonlight. In the mid-nineteenth century the Russian art was characterized by the distinct transition from Romanticism to Realism. The starting points were works by Alexey Venetsianov, who created a collective image of peasant Russia. Landscape backgrounds of his paintings have introduced into Russian painting the theme of nature as the scope of labor applications of human hands. The leading role in Russian art began to acquire a national landscape (Vasily Perov, Ivan Shishkin, Alexey Savrasov, etc.). In the second half of the 19th century, Fyodor Vasilyev and Arkhip Kuindzhi have introduced the lyrical landscape style in Russian art. Kuindzhi's works are especially remarkable for their light effects by capturing the illuminative aspect of the natural condition.

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