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Shifting Paths in the Study of Art in Ukraine

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Abstract

A significant conference *Ukrainian art theory and history at the crossroads of intellectual traditions* took place at Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv on March 14 and 15, 2024, jointly organized by the Department of Art History at the University and the NGO Centre for Historiography and Theory of Art. This event commemorated the centenary of the death of Hryhorii Pavlutskyi (1861–1924), who held the distinction of being the first professor of art theory and history at the Imperial University of St. Vladimir in Kyiv. The conference considered Pavlutskyi's role as an art historian and theorist and examined the major directions and trends in Ukrainian art theory and history from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries, as well as the current state of art history and theory in Ukraine.

This paper assesses the significance of Pavlutskyi as an art historian, and also as one of the important actors in the history of Ukraine in the early 1920s. It then focuses on three main themes of the reviewed conference: (1) intellectual exchange; (2) the influence of various political ideologies on Ukrainian art historical writing and (3) the juxtaposition of art history and the Ukrainian concept of *mystetstvoznavstvo* (art scholarship) as two different disciplines.

Keywords

Ukraine; art theory; intellectual history; Ukrainian historiography of art history; museum studies; Eastern European studies

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Shifting Paths in the Study of Art in Ukraine

Dariia Demchenko

Introduction

In March 2024 a conference was held at Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv on the topic of *Ukrainian Art Theory and History at the Crossroads of Intellectual Traditions*, commemorating the centenary of the death of Hryhorii Pavlutskyi (1861–1924) (**Figure 1**), a prominent figure in Ukrainian art historiography and one of the founders of the Kyiv art historical school. As a professor of art theory and history at the Imperial University of St. Vladimir (now Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv) (**Figure 2**), Pavlutskyi made significant contributions to how the field was conceived. Until he began teaching there, the official course curriculum primarily focused on the history of antique art. Pavlutskyi, in contrast, expanded its scope by teaching a comprehensive history of art, covering periods from the Ancient World to the nineteenth century. This article examines his impact as it was discussed at the conference, but before doing so, it is useful to understand the historical context in which he was working.

Art History in the Russian Empire

In 1804, Russian Emperor Alexander I signed the General University Statute, which regulated the university education system in the empire. According to this document, courses on ‘The Theory of Fine Arts and Archaeology’ were already available within the department of literary sciences at universities.¹ However, it was only in the mid-nineteenth century that departments of art theory and history started to appear in the Russian Empire. The first of these was the department at the Imperial Moscow University (today, Mikhail Lomonosov Moscow State University), established in 1857. It was headed by the archaeologist Karl Hertz (1820–1883), who, in his inaugural lecture had already defined the interdisciplinary nature of the discipline: ‘The history of art must come into contact with many sciences; indeed, it constitutes one of the essential parts of universal history, the history of literature, and philosophy.’²

Within six years, in 1863, the first department of art theory and history was opened in Ukraine, in the Imperial Kharkiv University (today, Vasyl Karazin Kharkiv National University) and, in 1875, the University of St. Vladimir. The head of the department of the latter was Platon Pavlov (1823–1895), who up to 1888 was its only professor. In developing the course,

1) Universitetskiy ustav (5 noyabrya 1804) [The University Statute (5th November 1804)], *Letopis Moskovskogo Universiteta*, <http://letopis.msu.ru/documents/327>.

2) Oksana Storchai, *Mystetska osvita v Kyivskomu universyteti (1834–1924)* [Art Education at Kyiv University (1834–1924)], Kyiv: Shchek, 2009, 115.



Figure 1: Hryhorii Pavlutskyi (1924).

Source: *Ukraina Art Journal* / Wikimedia Commons.



Figure 2: The Imperial University of St. Vladimir, Kyiv (1911).

Source: Gudshon and Gubchevsky Studio / Historic Postcard.

Pavlov relied on existing programs from the departments of Moscow University and Imperial Academy of Arts (today, Russian Academy of Arts), as well as universities in Western Europe, primarily Germany, which was one of the first to introduce the history of art into university teaching and prepare textbooks for the discipline.³ He divided his course into two parts: the theory of art, and the history of art from the ancient world to the early nineteenth century. However, even with Pavlov's arrival, the history of art had not been fully taught to students; Pavlov's course lacked a clear structure, as it remained optional for students, and the topics were taught selectively.

It was only with Pavlutskyi that there was significant reform in the teaching of art history at the university level. He was the first in the empire to teach a holistic history of art, from Greco-Roman antiquity to the present.⁴ To aid his students, Pavlutskyi translated Charles Bayet's *A Brief History of Art* and added his own chapters on the history of art in the Russian Empire in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁵ Moreover, in Ukraine, Pavlutskyi made perhaps the greatest efforts to institutionalize art history as a discipline. As he noted in his

3) Storchai, *Mystetska osvita v Kyivskomu universyteti*, 118.

4) *Ibidem*, 178.

5) Charles Bayet, *Précis d'histoire de l'art*, Paris: Maison Quantin, 1886.

text ‘On the Benefit of Art and Art History’ (1909), the devaluation of art history and even its non-recognition as a part of historical science was commonplace in the Russian Empire at that time. Against the common view that art exists only for the sake of temporary pleasure, he argued forcefully that ‘art is a mirror and an abbreviated chronicle of its time,’ and thus the science that studies it is necessary for historians, artists, and ‘any developed person.’⁶

In 1911, the Ministry of Public Education issued a circular that restricted the teaching of art history at universities. The discipline was not to be taught in its entirety and scope, but only in a limited way. In response, Pavlutskiy published a memo in defense of art history. In particular, he advocated its mandatory teaching to history students. The professor emphasized that art history should not be perceived as ‘fun for Privatdozenten,’ but rather as an opportunity for students to develop seriously in this field: ‘if there is a Master’s exam for art historians, then there should be a school for them.’⁷

As for Pavlutskiy’s research interests, he began his academic career in classical philology and considered himself a student of Julian Kulakovskiy (1855–1919), a doctor of Roman literature and professor at the Imperial University of St. Vladimir. Pavlutskiy’s students would later emphasize their teacher’s ‘historical-philological approach to art, for which artists so often reproach art historians.’⁸ It was only in the late 1880s that Pavlutskiy turned to the study of classical art and ‘published articles in the ‘University News’ on topics such as ‘On Greek Scenography, Greek painted vases, Phidias, metopes, etc.’⁹ Later, in 1897, he received a doctorate in art theory and history, defending his dissertation on *Genre Subjects in Greek Art up to the Hellenistic Era* at the University of Yuryev (now the University of Tartu, Estonia). It is worth noting that almost every art historian of the Russian Empire at the end of the nineteenth century, for example, began their research journey with Greco-Roman antiquity. That is why, in the programs of art history, the section on the history of the plastic arts of Greece and Rome was usually the most extensive.¹⁰ Hence, Alexander Brückner, professor of the Russian History Department at the University of Dorpat, argued at the *Third Archaeological Congress* in Kyiv, that history of art, emerged as a separate discipline organically from classical archaeology.¹¹

Greece and Rome were thus often an important starting point for researchers, after which they shifted their focus to the study of Byzantine or Rus’ art. This is due to the fact that both states, even during the time of the Russian Empire, were key elements in constructing its ‘great past.’ Accordingly, a rather strong school of Byzantine studies developed within the

6) Grigoriy Pavlutskiy, ‘O polze iskusstva i istorii iskusstv’ [On the Benefit of Art and Art History], *Iskusstvo i Pechatnoye Delo* 11–12, 1909, 9. The idea of the inseparable connection between culture and art can be found in virtually every text by Pavlutskiy. He synthesizes this idea particularly in his presentation at the annual ceremonial meeting of the Nestor the Chronicler Historical Society: ‘On the Connection between Art and Culture’ (1900).

7) The full text of Pavlutskiy’s memo is available in Storchai, *Mystetska osvita v Kyivskom universyteti*, 329.

8) Fedir Ernst, ‘Grigoriy Grigorievich Pavlutskiy,’ *Sredi Kolleksionerov*, 5–6, 1924, 58.

9) Ernst, ‘Grigoriy Grigorievich Pavlutskiy,’ 58.

10) Storchai, *Mystetska osvita v Kyivskom universyteti*, 128.

11) Alexander Brückner, ‘Kakiye mogut i dolzhny byt ustraivayemy, pri universitetskom prepodavanii arheologii, prakticheskiye uprazhneniya i zanyatiya?’ [What practical exercises and activities can and should be organized during university teaching of archaeology], in *Trudy Tret'yaho Arheologicheskogo S'yezda v Rossii* [Proceedings of the Third Archaeological Congress in Russia], vol. 1, Kyiv: Imperial University of St. Vladimir Press, 1878, 39. Alexander Brückner (1834–1869) was a professor of the Russian History Department at the University of Dorpat (now University of Tartu). Mainly his research was focused on the intellectual and cultural connections between the Russian Empire and Western Europe.

empire, which was interrupted by the onset of the revolution. So in Ukraine, the study of Byzantine art was particularly developed in Odesa and Kharkiv.

Indeed, medieval Rus' holds an important place in historiography not only in Russia but also in Ukraine, as both claim the status of the 'heir' to the medieval state.¹² The study of the art of medieval Rus' was actively encouraged through the focus on its cultural heritage. For example, Pavlutskyi himself identified the starting point of his new interest as the 11th Archaeological Congress held in Kyiv in 1899.¹³ The purpose of such congresses was to draw the attention of local scholars to their historical and cultural heritage. The Historical Society of Nestor the Chronicler played a major role in organizing the Archaeological Congress in Kyiv. Subsequently, it created the Commission for the Description of Antiquities of Ukraine, of which Pavlutskyi was a member. The main task of the new organization was to study church and secular architecture in Kyiv, Podillia, Volyn, Chernihiv, and Poltava governorates. Pavlutskyi consequently published the collected materials in the compendium *Antiquities of Ukraine: Wooden and Stone Temples of Ukraine* (1905).¹⁴ In general, Pavlutskyi was the first to consider Ukrainian art as a distinct subject of research, and published numerous articles on the topic. This included contributing to the six-volume *History of Russian Art*, edited by Igor Grabar (1871–1960), for which Pavlutskyi authored two chapters: 'Ancient Stone Architecture' and 'The Baroque of Ukraine.'¹⁵ In the latter, he was the first to coin the term 'Ukrainian Baroque,' which defines a distinct style formed by the interaction between Baroque and the 'wooden architecture of pre-Mongol Russia.'¹⁶ Thus, he noted, 'Ukraine created its own Baroque, borrowing all its constituent forms from the West, but transforming them in its own way; it created something new, which cannot be found in this form in the West, something certainly unique, and often beautiful.'¹⁷

In addition to his own research, Pavlutskyi played a significant role in Ukrainian art history as a promoter of Western ideas and methods, particularly those of contemporary French and German authors such as Eugène Müntz (1845–1902), Albert Dumont (1842–84), Charles Bayet (1849–1918), Wilhelm Lübke (1826–93) and Jakob Burckhardt (1818–97). These authors' works formed the basis of the recommended reading lists for his university courses. As Mykola Makarenko noted in the introduction to Pavlutskyi's posthumously published *History of Ukrainian Ornament* (1927), it was primarily due to his engagement with ideas abroad that Pavlutskyi developed his approach to historical and artistic research. In particular, 'the direction of his activity was mainly shaped by the collections in Paris and Berlin.'¹⁸ In this

12) For more on the role of medieval Rus, or more precisely, its construct as 'Kyivan Rus' and its influence on Ukrainian art historical writing see Illia Levchenko, 'The Nation as a Framework for Art Historical Writing,' in Stefaniia Demchuk, Illia Levchenko, eds, *Entangled Art Historiographies in Ukraine*, New York and London: Routledge, 2024, 203–222.

13) Afanasiev, 'Doslidnyk Ukrainskoho Mystetstva Hryhorii Pavlutskyi,' 15.

14) *Ibidem*, 16.

15) Pavlutskiy, 'Drevneyshee kamennoe zodchestvo' [Ancient Stone Architecture] in Igor Grabar, ed., *Istoriya Russkogo Iskusstva* [History of Russian Art], Moscow: Izdatelstvo I. Knebel, 1910, I, 143–330, and 'Ukrainskoye Baroko' [Ukrainian Baroque] in Grabar, ed., *Istoriya Russkogo Iskusstva* [History of Russian Art], Moscow: Izdatelstvo I. Knebel, 1911, 2, 337–416.

16) 'Ukrainskoye Baroko,' 346.

17) *Ibidem*, 407–8.

18) Mykola Makarenko, 'Hryhorii Hryhorovych Pavlutskyi' in Hryhorii Pavlutskyi *Istoriia Ukrainskoho Ornamentu* [History of Ukrainian Ornament], Kyiv: Printing House of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, 1927, 3.

regard, the time he spent in 1893 studying classical antiquity at the Sorbonne under the guidance of archaeologist and art historian Maxime Collignon (1849–1917) was especially important.

A Mediator between Western and Eastern European Art Historiographies

It was in order to reflect on the legacy and achievements of Pavlutskyi that the conference was convened. The first section, on ‘Ukrainian Art Theory and History at the Crossroads of Intellectual Traditions,’ focused on bridging Ukrainian and Western European perspectives in art historiography. The speakers in this section emphasized cross-cultural exchange and the active participation of Ukrainian scholars in discussions on art and culture elsewhere in Europe.

Two other papers by Illia Levchenko and one by the current author compared the scientific approaches of Pavlutskyi to those of Aby Warburg (1866–1929) and considered the possibility of a direct or indirect connection between the theories of these researchers. In 1904, Pavlutskyi published an article in which he sought to determine the origin and role of *putti* images in the interior of churches in Volyn and Podillia provinces (now in northwestern and southwestern Ukraine) (**Figure 3**).¹⁹ Specifically, he analyzed the ways in which the image of the *putto* migrated from antiquity to the Baroque period. As Demchenko and Levchenko pointed out, there were echoes, in Pavlutskyi’s theory, of Warburgian concepts such as *Nachleben der Antike* (survival of antiquity) and *Bilderwanderung* (the migration of images). One example is in the way that in Pavlutskyi’s characterisation, *putti* resemble the figure of the nymph that Aby Warburg was repeatedly interested in; both are figures devoid of individuality, moving through time and space.²⁰ They do not so much exist on their own, but rather as iconographic types. In Warburg, the nymph is in constant motion, fleeing from the gods. Hence, as André Jolles, an art historian who closely worked with Warburg and was a part of his intellectual circle, wrote in a letter to Warburg, she always brings life and movement; she crosses tranquility, cutting through it.²¹ The nymph has an indeterminate identity; as a symbol she can appear anywhere, at Christ’s feet or at Herod’s banquet. *Putti* also rarely appear alone. Most often, *putti* occupy space like a swarm. It was due to this quality, Pavlutskyi noted, that they became popular in the Baroque era precisely ‘as figures convenient for the decorative filling of space.’²²

Pavlutskyi defines the main characteristic of *putti* as their ludic quality.²³ In other words, while the nymph is the embodiment of movement, the *putto* is the embodiment of play. And

19) Grigoriy Pavlutskiy, *O derevyannyh reznyh izobrazheniyah puttov v yuzhno-russkikh tserkvah* [On Representations of Putti in Wood Carvings of the Southern Russian Lands in the 17th and 18th Centuries], Kyiv: Historical Society of Nestor the Chronicler, 1904.

20) For more on the comparison of *putti* and *Ninfa* as ‘images of the images’ see Bertrand Prévost, ‘Direction-dimension : Ninfa et putti,’ *Images Re-vues*, Hors-série, 4, 2013. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/imagesrevues.2941>.

21) Ernst Hans Gombrich, *Aby Warburg: An Intellectual Biography*, London: Phaidon, 1970, 113.

22) Pavlutskiy, *O derevyannyh reznyh izobrazheniyah puttov v yuzhno-russkikh tserkvah*, 10.

23) *Ibidem*, 7.



Figure 3: Eighteenth-century Wooden Putti Sculptures.

Source: Hryhorii Pavlutskyi, *On Representations of Putti in Wood Carvings of the Southern Russian Lands in the 17th and 18th Centuries*, Kyiv 1904.

it is this playfulness that, for Pavlutskyi, was definitive when he sought the first *putto* in art. The first one he named was the Boy with a Goose. Children were, of course, depicted earlier, but for Pavlutskyi this particular boy embodied the playfulness and childish boldness that every *putto* possesses. Conversely, the temporary ‘death’ of the *putto* in the Middle Ages he attributed to an absence of playfulness, which was then rediscovered later.

The reactivation of antiquity and the establishment of connections between it and other eras were generally popular themes for many art historians at the end of the nineteenth century. Accordingly, Pavlutskyi’s interest fitted completely into the spirit of his time. Highlighting the shared methods and ideas of Pavlutskyi and Warburg, and suggesting (in) direct connections between the two researchers, in turn, expands our understanding of the intellectual horizons of the Kyiv school of art history. In fact, there is no direct reference to Warburg in Pavlutskyi’s works. As a result, we cannot say with certainty that he had read the German scholar. Yet, he was well aware of the works of contemporary German art historians, and as Sergei Ghilarov has pointed out, nearly all the literature that Pavlutskyi references in his dissertation is in German.²⁴ Even if Pavlutskyi and Warburg were not in direct contact, the figures of Burckhardt, Müntz and Reinhard Kekulé von Stradonitz (1839–1911) were frequently cited in both scholars’ works. Burckhardt was a popular and scholar at the time, frequently

24) Sergei Ghilarov, ‘Pamyati G. G. Pavlutskogo’ [In Memory of H. H. Pavlutskyi], *Studii mystetstvoznavchi*, 4, 2015, 85.

cited across Europe and Russia, but the figures of Müntz and Kekulé are more intriguing in this context. Müntz's name first appears in Pavlutskyi's 1897 dissertation, meaning that by the time he wrote his article on putti, Pavlutskyi was already familiar with his work. Müntz, a professor of art history at the *École des Beaux Arts* in Paris, corresponded with Warburg and, as Michela Passini has noted, he was one of Warburg's most cited contemporary authors.²⁵ In preparing for his lectures, Pavlutskyi used Müntz's book *Art During the Renaissance* (1888), in which the French author examined art in connection with politics, economics, religion, fashion and other social and cultural factors.²⁶ It is clear that he was also influenced by Burckhardt's *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (1877–78), and Müntz himself described his work as 'essentially the history of civilization, rather than just the history of art.'²⁷

Kekulé was an archaeologist and director of the collection of antique sculpture and vases at the Berlin Museum, who had taught Warburg at the university of Bonn, and it was in his seminars that Warburg first came into contact with the idea of the *Pathosformel*.²⁸ Kekulé was one of the most influential archaeologists of his time, so Pavlutskyi, in his aforementioned dissertation, frequently cites Kekulé, although more often in a critical vein. For example, he criticises Kekulé's tendency to fill in the lack of factual data for certain period by drawing comparisons with 'analogous' facts from later periods.

Yet caution has to be exercised in suggesting that Kekulé was a link between Pavlutskyi and Warburg, for his work differed significantly from that of Warburg. Kekulé's concept of antiquity was quite different from that of Warburg. Nevertheless, Pavlutskyi's references to Kekulé are revealing about the intellectual world with which he was engaging, of which Warburg was also a significant member.

At the centenary conference Petro Kotliarov of Taras Shevchenko National University drew attention to the similarities between Pavlutskyi's theory of the action of 'will' in art and the concept of 'artistic will' (*Kunstwollen*) of Alois Riegl (1858–1905).²⁹ In his *History of Ukrainian ornament*, for example, Pavlutskyi asserted that the primary driver in art was not external (political, economic, or social) but internal (spiritual, individual) factors. Pavlutskyi acknowledges that art lives 'by will, not chance.' In other words, it is the internal impulse of will and inspiration that plays a decisive role in the development of art. Similarly, Riegl wrote about this same autonomous impulse in his work *Problems of Style: Foundations for a History of Ornament*.³⁰ Pavlutskyi himself doesn't provide an explanation of what 'artistic inspiration' and 'will' actually meant. Kotliarov did not provide any direct concrete evidence of connections between Pavlutskyi and other art historians. Moreover, the key phrase Pavlutskyi used, 'will, not chance' (*волею, а не свавільством*), could equally have been taken from Viollet-le-Duc,

25) Michela Passini, 'Eugène Müntz: un interlocuteur français d'Aby Warburg' [Eugène Müntz: A French interlocutor of Aby Warburg], *Images Re-vues*, Hors-série 4, 2013, 3.

26) Eugène Müntz, *Histoire de l'art pendant la Renaissance*. Paris: Hachette, 1888.

27) Passini, 'Eugène Müntz,' 3.

28) Georges Didi-Huberman, *The Surviving Image*, University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2017, 17.

29) Petro Kotliarov, "By the Will, not Chance": Hryhorii Pavlutskyi's 'History of Ukrainian ornament' (1927)' in Stefaniia Demchuk, Illia Levchenko, eds, *Entangled Art Histories in Ukraine*, New York and London: Routledge, 2024, 52–71.

30) Alois Riegl, *Stilfragen: Grundlegungen zu einer Geschichte der Ornamentik* [Problems of style: foundations for a history of ornament], Berlin: G. Siemens, 1893.

who used it in his book *Russian Art*, which was originally published in 1877 and then translated into Russian in 1879.³¹ In this work, Viollet-le-Duc devoted considerable space to Russian ornament and its formation through the interaction of Byzantine, Iranian, Scandinavian, and other artistic influences. Riegl's study, *Problems of Style*, in which he introduced the concept of *Kunstwollen*, was published 16 years after Viollet-le-Duc's book and is the more likely source (Pavlutskyi was preparing his work on the *History of Ukrainian Ornament* for publication in the late 1920s). There are no direct references to Riegl in Pavlutskyi's text. However, Riegl was a well-known figure among art historians in the Russian Empire. For example, in the *Archaeological Journey through Syria and Palestine* (1904), Nikodim Kondakov conducted a critical review of Riegl's *Problems of Style*.³² In 1906, Kondakov's student and, by then, a professor at Kharkiv University, Yegor Redin, published an obituary dedicated to Riegl.³³

In general, when discussing the possibility of intellectual connections between art historians in Kyivan and those elsewhere in Europe, we must consider a peculiar system of references. Often, authors omitted or did not mention other scholars, their texts, ideas, or concepts. This makes it difficult to directly answer the question: 'Did Pavlutskyi read Riegl and Warburg?' Nonetheless, we know that Ukrainian art historians were not isolated from their Western counterparts. For example, in the 1910s, there were Russian translations of Adolf von Hildebrand's (1847–1921) *The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture* and Heinrich Wölfflin's (1864–1945) *Classic Art*.³⁴ It is also worth recalling that the artist Mikhail Nesterov (1862–1942) referred to Pavlutskyi as 'a great admirer of Ruskin' even though no direct citations of Ruskin appear in Pavlutskyi's works.³⁵ Thus, in cases where there are no direct references, but the text suggests certain similarities, these instances provide fertile ground for deeper research and attempts to reconstruct the intellectual landscape of both Western and Eastern Europe.

Ideologies and Ukrainian art historiography

Another important topic of the conference was the influence of ideologies – political, national, and others – on Ukrainian art historical writing and its authors directly. When discussing Pavlutskyi, can we even identify him as a Ukrainian? The answer is that he more likely thought of himself as Ukrainian than not. This identification is not solely based on his contributions to the formation of Ukrainian art history as a discipline or his emphasis on Ukrainian art and its identity. It should be noted that from 1907 onwards, Hryhorii Pavlutskyi was a member of the Ukrainian Scientific Society, which required that speeches, meetings,

31) Hryhorii Pavlutskyi used Viollet-le-Duc's book translated in Russian by art historian Nikolay Sultanov: Eugen Viollet-le-Duc, *Russkoye Iskusstvo* [Russian Art], trans. Nikolay Sultanov, Moscow, 1879.

32) Nikodim Kondakov, *Arheologicheskoye puteshestviye po Sirii i Palestine* [Archaeological Journey through Syria and Palestine], Saint-Petersburg: Izdaniye Imperatorskoy Akademii Nauk, 1904.

33) Yegor Redin, 'Alois Riegl,' *Vizantijski vremennik* 13: 1, 1906, 496–497.

34) Adolf Gildebrand, *Problema formy v izobrazitelnom iskusstve i sobranie statey* [The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture and Collected Essays], trans. Nikolay Rozenfeld, Vladimir Favorsky, Moscow: Musaget, 1914.; Genrih Wyolflin, *Klassicheskoye iskusstvo* [Classic Art], trans. A. Konstantinova, Vera Nevezhyna, St. Petersburg: Brockhaus and Efron, 1912.

35) Mikhail Nesterov, *Pisma* [Letters], Leningrad: Isskustvo, 1988, 165.

and other activities be conducted exclusively in Ukrainian.³⁶ But it was during the late 1910s that Pavlutskyi most clearly expressed his pro-Ukrainian stance. Between 1917 and 1920, Pavlutskyi's public activities took precedence over his scientific and pedagogical work. As his student Fedir Ernst remarked, Pavlutskyi 'was full of love for Ukraine.'³⁷ During this period, Pavlutskyi made significant contributions to the development of Ukrainian educational institutions, including the Kyiv Academy of Arts and the Kyiv Archaeological Institute. He also held several administrative positions at the Mykhailo Drahomanov Higher Institute of Public Education, where he continued to teach art history. This took place during the time of the Ukrainian National Revolution (1917–1921) when the Ukrainian national movement emerged as a new political actor, and sought to establish a state for a nation caught between the Austria-Hungary and Russian empire.

In 1919, Pavlutskyi coauthored an 'Explanatory Note on the Project of Organizing the Historical and Philological Department of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences.'³⁸ In the section on Ukrainian art, he wrote that researchers had already 'firmly established the existence of a distinct national Ukrainian style throughout the territory inhabited by the Ukrainian people, from the Don to the Carpathians.' He concluded: 'The artistic movement ... has awakened in the citizenry a lively interest in their native antiquity, in everything that manifests national creativity. Now the history of Ukrainian art has become a work for the people themselves and has acquired their special affection and love.'³⁹

However, by the end of 1919, Ukrainians had lost all hope of political independence and fell under Soviet rule. This period in Professor Pavlutskyi's intellectual biography was highlighted at the conference by Olena Liapina. Pavlutskyi's attempts to establish an independent Ukrainian higher education system were in vain: universities were disbanded, and their management was eliminated. For example, in 1920, during the educational reform carried out by the Soviet government, Kyiv University was formed by merging the Imperial University of St. Vladimir, Kyiv State Ukrainian University, Kyiv Higher Women's Courses, the Teachers' Institute, and other educational institutions of the Drahomanov Higher Institute of Public Education was founded. At the same time, art history as a discipline was marginalized. According to Liapina, in 1921 the Provincial Department of Vocational Education demanded the removal of the 'History of Art' course from the curriculum of the Drahomanov Institute and the introduction of social science disciplines instead (such as 'The Soviet Constitution,' 'Soviet Policy in Education,' 'The History of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party and the Russian Communist Party'). However, this change was not implemented.

36) Andrii Puchkov, *Mizh Navihatsiynymy Shchohlamy: Profili Ukrainykh Mystetstvoznavtsiv* [Between Navigational Masts: Profiles of Ukrainian Art Historians], Kyiv: Dukh i Litera, 2018, 150–1.

37) Ernst, 'Grigoriy Grigorievich Pavlutskiy,' 59. Ernst (1891–1942) was an art historian. As he himself claimed, he was inspired for research in the fields of the Ukrainian art and cultural heritage directly by Hryhorii Pavlutskyi, his professor in the Imperial University of St. Vladimir. Up to the 1930s, Ernst conduct teaching and scientific activities in Kyiv. From 1933 to 1941 he experienced three arrests and was executed for 'German espionage.'

38) Dmytro Bahalii, Ahatanhel Krymskiy, Hryhorii Pavlutskyi and Yevhen Tymchenko, 'Poiasniuucha Zapyska do Proiektu Organizatsii Istorychno-Filolohichnoho Viddilu Ukrainskoi Akademii Nauk' [Explanatory Note to the Project of Organizing the Historical and Philological Department of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences] in *Zbirnyk Prats Komisii dlia Vyroblennia Zakonoproiektu pro Zasnuvannia Ukrainskoi Akademii Nauk u Kyivi* [Collection of Works of the Commission for Drafting the Bill on the Establishment of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences in Kyiv], Kyiv: Printing House of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, 1919.

39) *Ibidem*, x.

During this period, Pavlutskyi remained in Kyiv and took on several administrative roles at the Drahomanov Higher Institute of Public Education. He served as vice-rector for academic affairs, actively participated in setting up the institute, and, by 1922, was likely appointed director of the institute's library while also heading the Museum of Fine Arts. At the same time, he continued to teach art history and was one of the few teachers at the Drahomanov Institute to conduct their courses in Ukrainian. It is also noteworthy that Oleksandr Ohloblyn's collection includes an interesting anonymous document titled *List of Professors and Lecturers of the Drahomanov Institute (with characteristics)*.⁴⁰ The document says of Pavlutskyi: 'He is one of the few old professors who is fully on the Soviet platform. He is actively working in the field of higher education reform.'⁴¹

Although Liapina describes this characterization of Pavlutskyi's relationship to the new Soviet system as an 'exaggeration,' such fluidity of political identity was not uncommon at the time. Another speaker at the conference, Pavlo Zolotukha (Bohdan and Varvara Khanenko National Museum of Art) illustrated this with the example of the art historian Serhii Hiliarov.⁴² Hiliarov, a student of Pavlutskyi, worked as an employee at the Museum of Art of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences. During the German occupation of Kyiv (1941–1943) he even served as its director. Zolotukha, who has undertaken archival research, including examining Hiliarov's lectures at the Kyiv Art Institute and records of interrogations conducted by the State Political Administration of the Ukrainian SSR in 1933 and during 1945–1946, emphasised that Hiliarov generally sought to avoid public declarations of ideological certainty, although he did so when compelled to in specific circumstances. This deliberate ambiguity allowed him to continue his research activities under different political regimes.

In Pavlutskyi's case, it was perhaps this adaptability that allowed him to continue his pedagogical and scientific activities (particularly in Ukrainian) and, most importantly, to establish an independent historical and artistic school in Kyiv. This group includes figures such as Hiliarov, Ernst, the historian of Asian art Vsevolod Zummer (1885–1970), the ethnographer Danylo Shcherbakivskyi (1877–1927) and Dmytro Antonovych, an art historian and minister of arts (1918–1919) during the Ukrainian People's Republic of 1917–1921.⁴³ The situation was quite different at the University of Kharkiv, where there was a school of Byzantine studies led by Fedir Schmit. In her discussion of the topic at the conference, Maryna Domanovska (Vasyl Karazin Kharkiv National University) pointed out that although Kharkiv had a prominent center for Byzantine studies, its development was curtailed in the 1930s due to the arrest of Schmit and his students. Schmit was first arrested in 1920 on suspicion of involvement with the

40) Oleksandr Ohloblyn (1899–1992) was a Ukrainian historian, archivist and a president of Ukrainian Academy of Arts and Sciences in the US (1970–1989), founded by Ukrainian emigrated scholars.

41) *Spytsky lektoriv VINO im. M. Drahomanova u m. Kyievi* [List of Professors and Lecturers of the Drahomanov Institute in Kyiv], The Central State Archive of the Highest Authorities and Government of Ukraine, 3561, box 259, folder 18.

42) Serhii Hiliarov (1887–1946) was an art historian. He conducted teaching activities in several Kyivan institutions. From 1919 he joined the Arts Museum of Ukrainian Academy of Sciences (today – Bohdan and Varvara Khanenko National Museum of Art), where he became one of the founders of a graduate school. Beside that, Hiliarov made a series of attributions in the museum. One of them – the diptych 'Adam and Eve' (1530) by Lucas Cranach the Elder, which then was sold by the bolsheviks on the auction in Berlin in 1929.

43) Zummer was head of the Department of Art History in Baku State University (Azerbaijan) in the 1920s. Antonovych (1877–1945) was also one of the founders of the Ukrainian academy of fine arts in Kyiv (1917) and the Ukrainian Free University in Vienna (1921), where he also held the position of rector.

National Centre, a pro-monarchist political organization, which existed from 1917 to 1920. He was accused of preparing and signing the ‘Appeal of Scientists of Southern Russia to Scientists of Western Europe’ (1919), which was essentially a call for military help to Anton Denikin, leader of the anti-bolshevik forces in southern Russia, against the ‘destructive advance of the Bolsheviks.’⁴⁴ He was sentenced to three years’ imprisonment with community service.⁴⁵

By 1932, Schmit’s relations with the communist authorities had deteriorated even further, and he was accused of ‘deviating from Marxism.’⁴⁶ His affiliation with the Byzantine studies school also became a point of reproach (and threat) to his students. Finally, in 1934, Schmit was arrested again, this time for charges including ‘nationalist propaganda,’ ‘leading cells of a pro-fascist organization in humanitarian scientific institutions in Leningrad,’ and ‘involvement in the fascist organization of Russian and Ukrainian nationalists—the Russian National Party.’⁴⁷ In 1937, he was executed as an enemy of the people.

Theory, History of Art and *Mystetstvoznavstvo*

The last section of the conference, titled ‘Ukrainian Art History and *Mystetstvoznavstvo*: Past and Future,’ carried a somewhat provocative title in the Ukrainian context. While the concepts of art history and *mystetstvoznavstvo* are often used interchangeably in the Ukrainian context, the conference organizers insist on distinguishing them as two different approaches to the study of art. In particular, they emphasize the year 1937, marking it as the upper limit of the conference. At that time, following the Resolution of the Council of People’s Commissars of the USSR ‘On Scientific Degrees and Titles’ No. 464,⁴⁸ some Ukrainian higher education institutions started offering qualifications in *mystetstvoznavstvo*. According to the organizers, this ‘marked the end of the first stage of the development of the science of art in Ukraine and the emergence of Soviet ‘*mystetstvoznavstvo*’ on new methodological principles.’⁴⁹

However, this periodization, where a new stage is dependent on ‘new’ terminology, seems problematic. If we are talking about the destruction (for example, institutional) of the previous science of art, it begins much earlier than 1937, and the popularization of the term *mystetstvoznavstvo* plays a role only as one element of the colonial policy of the Soviet Union. First, the term itself existed in the Russian and Ukrainian contexts back in the times of the Russian Empire. So, *mystetstvoznavstvo* is a literal translation of the Russian term *iskusstvovedenie*, which, in turn, is an analogue of the German *Kunstwissenschaft*. It should be noted that in imperial times, the term was rarely used, mainly as a translation of the German one. For example, in volume nine of the ‘Russian Encyclopedia’ (1914), *iskusstvovedenie*

44) Oleksii Nestulia, ‘Ponad Use Vin Stavyy Istynu’ [Above all, he valued the truth], in Nestulia, *Represovane Kraieznavstvo* [Repressed Local History], Kyiv: Ridnyi Krai, 1991, 38.

45) Ibidem.

46) Ibidem, 49.

47) Ibidem, 50.

48) Since then, and to this day, some Ukrainian higher education institutions have continued to offer qualifications in *mystetstvoznavstvo*.

49) *Ukrainska teoriia ta istoriia mystetstv na perekhresty intelektualnyh tradytsiy* [Ukrainian art theory and history at the crossroads of intellectual traditions], *Events* [Facebook page], n. d., <https://www.facebook.com/events/1306054649998862/> (URL: accessed 1 November 2024).

is mentioned as a discipline ‘mainly of German science,’ separate from art history, which studies ‘monuments of art history in their artistic essence.’⁵⁰ At the same time, the titles of university departments and academic degrees of that time in the Russian Empire generally referred to ‘Art Theory and History.’

The terms *mystetstvoznavstvo* and *iskusstvovedenie* gained popularity with the advent of Soviet power. In the 1920s, after the reorganization of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, the departments of world and Ukrainian art, headed by F. Schmit and Oleksii Novytskyi⁵¹ respectively, continued to operate.⁵² However, in 1922, by order of the Main Committee for Professional and Specialized Education of the People’s Commissariat of Education of the Ukrainian SSR, a scientific research department of *mystetstvoznavstvo* was established.⁵³ One of the key tasks of the new structural unit, according to its head, Schmit, was the development of an art theory that ‘would correspond to communist statehood and could serve as the basis for the state-artistic policy of the Ukrainian SSR.’⁵⁴ To continue its existence under Soviet rule, art history also had to survive its own ‘revolution,’ and to ‘rebuild itself fundamentally.’⁵⁵ In Soviet historiography, the October Revolution of 1917 is often defined as the moment of the birth of the science of art. For example, Ivan Vrona, the rector of the Kyiv Art Institute, wrote in his article ‘Pressing Issues of Art Education’ that only ‘after the revolution, in connection with the new materialist Marxist view of art and its productive and socio-practical tasks in modernity,’ does the real problem of building art education in Ukraine arise.’⁵⁶

It is clear that in this way, the Soviet authorities forcibly created a break in the continuity of the discipline. In addition, the emergence of the ‘new science of art’ undoubtedly served as one of the components of the colonial policy of the Soviet Union. This topic was analysed in depth by Stefaniia Demchuk and Illia Levchenko in their article ‘Decolonizing Ukrainian Art History.’⁵⁷ They argue that the main consequences of this policy was that Ukrainian researchers focused on studying Ukrainian art, avoiding theoretical problems.⁵⁸ Furthermore, until the 1950s, it was possible to obtain a degree in *mystetstvoznavstvo* only in Moscow or Leningrad, as there were no opportunities for study abroad.⁵⁹ All this aimed at provincializing Ukrainian

50) Sergei Adrianov ed., *Russkaya Ensiklopediya* [Russian Encyclopedia], Saint-Petersburg: Deyatel, 1914, 9, 78.

51) Oleksii Novytskyi (1862–1934) was an art historian and archaeologist. His research focused on Ukrainian and Byzantine art. He was one of the key figures involved in preserving Ukrainian cultural heritage, promoting its significance, and advocating for the return of artifacts to Ukraine from museums and archives, particularly those in Russia.

52) Mariia Sichka, *Diialnist Kyivskyyh Mystetstvoznavstiv u 1920 – 1930-ti roky: sotsialno-kulturnyi aspekt* [Activity of Kyiv Art Researchers in the 1920s – 1930s: Socio-Cultural Aspect], Kyiv: Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University PhD Dissertation Thesis, 2017, 43.

53) Iryna Khodak, N’aukovo-Doslidna Kafedra Mystetstvoznavstva: Pochatkovy Etap Diialnosti (1922–1924)’ [The Scientific Research Department of *mystetstvoznavstvo*: the initial stage of activity (1922–1924)], *Studii mystetstvoznavchi*, 2, 2014, 110.

54) Ibidem.

55) Ivan Vrona, ‘Nazrili pytannia izo-mystetskoï osvity’ [Pressing Issues of Art Education], *Mystetsko-Tekhnichnyi Vysh.*, 1, 1928, 41.

56) Ibidem.

57) Stefaniia Demchuk and Illia Levchenko, ‘Decolonizing Ukrainian Art History,’ *Nationalities Papers*, vol. 52: 5, 2024 (DOI: 10.1017/nps.2024.58).

58) Ibidem, 13.

59) Ibidem.

art history. The Soviet authorities instrumentalized *mystetstvoznavstvo* as a key part of colonial policy in the field of education.⁶⁰

Serving as an umbrella term for art history, art theory, and art criticism, *mystetstvoznavstvo* essentially deformed each of the three domains and it displaced previous modes of art historical inquiry. Consequently, Demchuk and Levchenko have argued that denunciation of the term is a necessary first step towards decolonizing knowledge.⁶¹ Yet if we are talking purely at a terminological level, we cannot say that *mystetstvoznavstvo* ‘replaced the theory and history of art.’⁶² Rather, the concepts coexisted. Despite the renewal of scientific degree titles in 1937, there was no strict analogous renewal of the names of academic departments. For example, the Department of Art History continued to exist at the Kyiv Art Institute. In 1959, it was transformed into the Faculty of Art History and Theory. In other words, the actualization of the term, by and large, had limited significance. Thus, in the discussion about *mystetstvoznavstvo* and art history, the main problem is not so much in the formation of a specific Soviet Newspeak⁶³ and, through it, a concrete colonial impact, but, rather in the formation of a new approach to scholarship and science in general. With the advent of Soviet power and the implementation of reforms in higher education, all inquiry into art was constrained within the framework of Marxist-Leninist methodology.

Here is how Schmit, then Director of the Institute of Art History in Leningrad, wrote about this in his article ‘The Study of Art in USSR 1917–1928’: ‘In art history that meant a fundamental revision of ideas as to the character both of Byzantine and of Russian art...An art historian can, when being unscientific, limit himself to the study of the style and meaning of a work of art without raising the questions as to who made it or who it was made for. To such a person, art becomes an abstraction; he can construct aesthetic categories and artistic qualities, and can talk of creative genius and the like. If, however, the art historian has set for him the task of always raising the questions to what social group an artist belongs to and what social stratum has the artist been working for (the art historian is not expected to go further), then abstract art disappears like a phantom and every work of art becomes a sociological document. Looked at in this sociological way, neither Byzantine nor Russian art seems any longer to represent a uniform style but rather a complex of very heterogeneous currents, which are not “more beautiful” or “more artistic” one than another but belong merely to the evolution of different social strata.’⁶⁴ It is in the applied nature of *mystetstvoznavstvo*, its fundamental sociological character, Schmit writes, that its key difference from ‘European’ scholarship lies.⁶⁵ In other words, what was at stake was a common field of inquiry – the scholarly study (or ‘science’) of art, as in the ‘West,’ but with different approaches; *mystetstvoznavstvo* was thus more an aggressive deformation of the previous, imperial, conception of the study of art rather than a full replacement of it.

60) Ibidem, 12.

61) Ibidem, 20.

62) Stefaniia Demchuk and Illia Levchenko eds, *Entangled Art Historiographies in Ukraine*, New York and London: Routledge, 2024, 6.

63) Demchuk and Levchenko, ‘Decolonizing Ukrainian Art History,’ 11.

64) Theodor Schmit, ‘The Study of Art in the U.S.S.R. (1917–1928),’ *Parnassus*, vol. 1, 1, 1929, 8.

65) Ibidem, 9.

The term *mystetstvoznavstvo* continues to persist in the field of Ukrainian study of art, sparking debates about its relevance and appropriateness. While it might seem to be merely a struggle over terminology, debates are, in fact, part of an attempt to open a broader discussion about the nature of Ukrainian art scholarship. To what extent has it broken free from Soviet influence, how aligned it is with contemporary approaches to study of art elsewhere, globally, or is it, perhaps, forging its own versions of art historical methodologies developed in western Europe and North America? Unfortunately, debate about *mystetstvoznavstvo* has yet to prove productive, since it often fails to move beyond terminological disputes, for the issue of terminology proves to be a particularly sensitive subject for Ukrainian art researchers.

In independent Ukraine today, the historical connotations of the term *mystetstvoznavstvo* are practically absent, and it resists any attempt to give it a clear interpretation. For example, in the special issue of *Text and Image*, four definitions of *mystetstvoznavstvo* were provided: a superior theoretical science that surpasses art history; connoisseurship; connoisseurship combined with a national art-historical narrative; a colonial tool that introduces a different paradigm of knowledge.⁶⁶ This lack of clarity, notes Demchuk, prevents easy translation of the term into English. It is not the same as *Kunstwissenschaft*, even if the term is a literal translation of the German. Nor, she says, is it the same as Soviet-era *mystetstvoznavstvo*, as the latter lacks ‘Western art historiography’ and modern historical methodologies.⁶⁷

Looking at such a contradictory array of definitions and idea, one might ask whether there is any point in fighting over something that is divided against itself? In its multitude of meanings, *mystetstvoznavstvo* practically means nothing anymore. And there is little sense in any attempt to ‘restore’ the concept, to return it to its ‘Soviet’ meaning and thereby highlighting its colonial function, because in that case, *mystetstvoznavstvo* turns into a kind of empty signifier or a scapegoat, the destruction of which is supposed to resolve the existing conflict between approaches to the study of art in Ukraine. However, the problem with scapegoating is that the scapegoat is always a substitute, a redirection of force, and never the true component of any crisis.

The conversation about the present should thus begin, instead, with the state of art history education in Ukraine, and to better understand this, it is useful to take a comparative glance at the two departments of art history in Kyiv: in (1) the National Academy of Fine Arts and Architecture (NAFAA) and (2) Kyiv National University (KNU), which produce entirely different specialists. In fact, the department of art history in NAFAA did not undergo any radical changes after Ukraine gained independence in 1991.⁶⁸ It remains the same Soviet-style institution, merely adjusted to a national mode. Students there are more focused on studying cultural management, while the history and theory of art are secondary.⁶⁹ However, the Art History Department in KNU is completely different. It was re-established in 2014, a year that

66) Demchuk and Levchenko, ‘Decolonizing Ukrainian Art History,’ 18–9.

67) Stefaniia Demchuk, ‘Gombrich, Ukraina ta Insha Nauka pro Mystetstvo’ [Gombrich, Ukraine Another Science of Art], *Text and Image: Essential Problems in Art History* 2: 14, 2022, 48. DOI: 10.17721/2519-4801.2022.2.05.

68) Lada Nakonechna, ‘Istoriia reform Natsionalnoi akademii obrazotvorchoho mystetstva ta arkhitektury’ [The history of reforms of the National Academy of Fine Arts and Architecture], *Kurbasivski chyrynnia*, 12, 2017, 3–4.

69) Taras Berezyuk, ‘Pro Mystetstvoznavstvo, Istoriuu Mystetstv, Infrastrukturu Obumovlenist’ [On Connoisseurship, Art History, Infrastructure Conditionality], *Text and Image: Essential Problems in Art History* 2: 14, 2022, 32. Ibidem, 35.

can be said to mark a truly new stage for art-historical writing in Ukraine.⁷⁰ This beginning coincided with the so-called Revolution of Dignity and the activation of the decommunization process, which sparked a wave of interest in modern theory and methodology of art research. This is probably why the KNU's department has distinguished itself from the outset by its attention to theoretical and interdisciplinary research.

However, the situation between the departments is so tense that they practically refuse to recognize each other, with scholars at the NAFAA accusing their colleagues at KNU of consists only of trained historians, while, conversely, those at KNU criticise their counterparts of isolating art from historical contexts. The situation that allows for mutual hostility of approaches is, of course, also a consequence of the colonial policy of the USSR. 'Positivism,' the 'connoisseurship' approach to art, and the current entrenchment of the art-historical education system were caused not by carelessness, but by the deliberate destruction of previous traditions. In short, continuous ruptures are the main reason for the current crisis. Thus, the 'discussion of *mystetstvoznavstvo*' is not really a discussion about 'right' and 'wrong' terminology, even if this is its ostensible focus, but rather a debate about the entire methodology of art research in Ukraine, and even its decolonization.

Conclusions

The figure of Pavlutskyi allows one to connect various stages of the Ukrainian study of art. He stood at its origins, contributed to its institutional strengthening, and even after the change of political regime, continued to teach in higher educational institutions until his death in March 1924. However, the tradition formed by Pavlutskyi and other lecturers from imperial times was curtailed by Sovietization. It seems that from this moment, the paths of art history in Ukraine begin to diverge and increasingly distance themselves from each other. Nevertheless, today, when discussion about decolonization has become central to Ukrainian academic discourse following Russia's full-scale invasion on February 24th, 2022, there is a significant opportunity for them to be brought together again through a productive dialogue and setting a common vector towards a global context, not just a Ukrainian one.

70) Demchuk and Levchenko, 'Decolonizing Ukrainian Art History,' 17.



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