Boichukism: Project of the "Grandiose Art Style"

Svitlana Biedarieva

Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/critiquedart/47380>

DOI: 10.4000/critiquedart.47380

ISSN: 2265-9404

Publisher

Groupe d'intérêt scientifique (GIS) Archives de la critique d'art

Electronic reference

Svitlana Biedarieva, « Boichukism: Project of the "Grandiose Art Style" », *Critique d'art* [Online], All the reviews on line, Online since 27 May 2020, connection on 24 September 2020. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/critiquedart/47380> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/critiquedart.47380>

This text was automatically generated on 24 September 2020.

EN

Boichukism: Project of the “Grandiose Art Style”

Svitlana Biedarieva

- 1 The catalogue of the exhibition *Boichukism: Project of the Grandiose Style* at the Mystetskyi Arsenal presents an attempt of art historical recovery of the forgotten masterpieces of Ukrainian monumental art. A large part of Ukrainian artistic legacy was lost during the 1930s. From a poetic metaphor, the term “executed Renaissance” became an accepted notion for the whole generation of intellectuals, writers, artists, and poets who were repressed in the days of Joseph Stalin’s terror. The legacy of Mykhailo Boichuk and his school then was widely forgotten until the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the independence of Ukraine. The exhibition at the Mystetskyi Arsenal included surviving work that at large does not give justice to the entire corpus of work that perished. In 1910, at the *Salon des Indépendants* in Paris, Boichuk’s works and the works of his students (the so-called “boichukists”) were presented as the “revival of Byzantine art” or a “neo-Byzantine school” informed by the Eastern iconographic tradition. In 1917, Boichuk became the head of the monumental art studio at the newly created Ukrainian State Academy of Arts. From the 1920s, in an attempt to save their work, Boichuk and his followers tried to adhere to the canon of Socialist Realism, however, their style informed by Byzantine icons was not seen as “socialist” by the Soviet government. The law of 1932 prohibited any kind of artist collectives beyond the formal unions of artists established and controlled by the state. The institutionalization of art meant the end of boichukism as an independent phenomenon. The Soviet authorities labelled their monumental work as ideologically dangerous. Mykhailo Boichuk, his wife Sofya Nalepinska-Boychuk and his students Vasyl Sedliar and Ivan Padalka were executed in 1937 on the accusations of “bourgeois nationalism”. Most of their mural works were destroyed. The catalogue gives an important example of the remains of the murals made by Boichuk and his students at the Academy of Art that were destroyed after his execution and recovered only in the past few decades. The exhibition at the Mystetskyi Arsenal was one of the first large-scale attempts to recover the legacy of boichukism and to focus on its importance for the national culture of Ukraine. Another book that contributes to this topic of the emergence of boichukism in Paris is Vita Susak’s

monograph *Ukrainian Artists in Paris: 1900-1939* (2010). One more important source is the catalogue of a key exhibition *Spetsfond 1937-1939 rokiv: Z kollektzii NKhMU* (2016) at the National Museum of Art of Ukraine, where the works of the artists from the "special fund" that were deemed incompatible with the values of the Socialist Realism were displayed for the first time after having been held in storage for seven decades, since 1937. Many of these works were from the boichukist artists.