

# Teaching Traditional Folk Culture at Modern Russian General Education School

## Enseñanza de la cultura popular tradicional en la moderna escuela de educación general rusa

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### ABSTRACT:

The article deals with the problems of teaching traditional folk culture at the modern Russian general education school. To solve the mentioned problems, the authors suggested original approach to studying the peculiarities of the Russian national culture based on image systems and structures of the mythological model of thinking. Based on such central image of the Russian mythopoetic model of the traditional art as the one of the Mother Damp Earth, the operational framework of concepts defining the specific features of representations of matter and form in the Russian cultural tradition was developed. The author formulated the fundamental principles of form-creation in the Russian culture as a whole. The study also revealed the pedagogical potential of the basic foundations of traditional culture for the process of assimilating the national culture by pupils of different age categories. The article contains the findings of long-term experimental work (which lasted for seventeen years) with the teachers at career enhancement training courses as well as with pupils of different types of

### RESUMEN:

El artículo aborda los problemas de la enseñanza de la cultura popular tradicional en la moderna escuela de educación general rusa. Para resolver los problemas mencionados, los autores sugirieron el acercamiento original a estudiar las peculiaridades de la cultura nacional rusa basada en sistemas de imagen y estructuras del modelo mitológico del pensamiento. Basándose en la imagen central del modelo mythopoetic ruso del arte tradicional como la de la madre tierra húmeda, el marco operativo de los conceptos que definen las características específicas de las representaciones de la materia y la forma en la tradición cultural rusa fue desarrollado. El autor formuló los principios fundamentales de la creación de formas en la cultura rusa en su conjunto. El estudio también reveló el potencial pedagógico de las bases básicas de la cultura tradicional para el proceso de asimilación de la cultura nacional por alumnos de diferentes categorías de edad. El artículo contiene los resultados del trabajo experimental de largo plazo (que duró por diecisiete años) con los profesores en los cursos de

schools.

**Keywords:** Russian traditional folk culture, mythological structures, archetype, Russian education.

entrenamiento del realce de la carrera así como con los alumnos de diversos tipos de escuelas.

**Palabras clave:** cultura folklórica tradicional rusa, estructuras mitológicas, arquetipo, educación rusa.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Topicality

The issue of traditional folk culture's place in education is topical for a number of reasons. In global ideological context, the clash of two paradigms takes place: the globalist one that neutralises national differences, and the traditionalist one considering the national component to be vital not only for self-preservation of the nation, but also for forming new layer of modern culture by the nation. Since the 2000s in the Russian society there has been the turn to traditional values, both at the level of the state on the whole and at all levels of national formations. The issues of support of traditional folk culture are considered at the highest state level (Propp 1996; Putin 2006). In educational domain the authors of *Concept of Federal State Educational Standards of General Education* set up an extremely difficult target of "forming Russian and civil identity based on developing tolerant attitudes for living in multicultural society, as well as for ingraining patriotic beliefs" (Yermolinskaya 2015).

## 1.2. Research domain

The subject of the study presented in the article is teaching traditional folk culture at general education school at the current stage of Russian education development. Due to small size of the article, the research subject is limited by the issues of teaching Russian traditional folk culture in Art classes. However, general ideas can be used as a reference scheme for teaching on any of numerous folk cultures of our multi-ethnic state.

*The role of folk culture.* We define the role of traditional folk culture in school art education at the level of personal development, based on fundamental statement by C. Lévi-Strauss, which he formulated in his work *Race and History*: "Man grows to man's estate surrounded, not by humanity in the abstract, but by a traditional culture" (Levi-Strauss 2000). The ideas suggested by D.S.Likhachev are also important for us: He wrote about the role of traditional folk culture in developing modern culture and aesthetic culture on the whole. In his work *The Native Land* he pointed that: "Each culture seeks connections with the past ... popular art is characterized by brevity, colorfulness, cheerfulness, courage in solving artistic problems. In addition, studying our past may and must enrich modern culture. Modern reading of forgotten ideas, images, traditions, as is often the case, can give us a cue about many new things" (Lihachyov 1983). According to D.S. Likhachev's opinion on aesthetic education and upbringing, folk art "can serve as a starting point for understanding any art"... Folk art teaches us to understand the conventionality of art (Lihachev 2015), because "folk art works' shape is the form artistically honed by the time" (Lihachev 2015).

Thus, the *research subject* can be described more precisely as building national identity of the pupil as co-creator of modern artistic national culture based on assimilating fundamental formal and aesthetic as well as ethical values of traditional folk culture.

*Background.* Brief overview of introducing traditional folk culture into the educational process demonstrated that this domain of culture became the subject of study during the decay of traditional society in which the family was the main transmitter of traditional folk culture foundations. K.D. Ushinsky, one of the fathers of Russian pedagogy, was the first person who in the 1860-1870s spoke of "nationhood" (*narodnost'*) in public education. (Ushinskiy 1990). In the context of surging interest to national folk art in the late 19th century, marked with the establishment of the first museum collections of folk art and the emergence of art centres in

Abramtsevo (S.I. Mamontov) and Talashkino (M.K. Tenisheva), in which outstanding Russian artists, such as V.M.Vasnetsov, V.D.Polenov, E.D.Polenova, M.A.Vrubel, N.K.Roerich, and S.V.Malyutin were looking for "new Russian style" and revitalised the ancient techniques of folk arts and crafts: first schools with elements of teaching different types of folk art appeared. This is *Kustar Training Workshop* founded in art workshops in Abramtsevo (Fomina 2002), and *Agricultural school for peasant children* established by M.K.Tenisheva in the village of Flenov situated next to Talashkino estate. Tenisheva developed the first curricula which included arts and crafts classes: embroidery and lace making for girls, carpentry, woodcarving and pottery for boys. The particular feature of M.K.Tenisheva's approach from the methodological perspective was that the pieces of traditional folk art were considered to be sources of inspiration rather than subjects for copying.

Ideological paradigms with the focus on internationalism and proletarian culture in the education of the 1920s and 1930s were not favourable for introducing foundations of Russian folk culture into the general education school. These conditions emerged in the 1950s -1960s, when interest to national folk culture revived and found expression in the works of artists of the "severe" school (N.I. Andronov, V.I. Ivanov, V.E.Popkov, V.F. Stozharov, S.P. and A.P. Tkachev) and writers of "village prose" (F.A.Abramov, V.P.Astafyev, V.I.Belov, V.G.Rasputin). At the level of academic historical science in the works by B.A. Rybakov (Rybakov 1994) and V.M.Vasilenko (Bart 2008; Vasilenko 1974; Vasilenko 1977) on Slavic mythology and semantics of folk art methodological foundations for developing content and techniques of teaching the basics of folk culture were laid. V.N.Polunina played a great role in introducing the basics of folk culture directly into school practice combining the activities of researcher, teacher and collector of folk peasant original cultural artefacts. She created the first school museum of folk art at Moscow school No. 772, founded the Children's Centre of Traditional National Culture, published a number of books in which she substantiated the system of art education for children based on their close contact with the monuments of folk art (Polunina 1973; Polunina 1989).

B.M.Nemensky (artist, member of academy, the head of the group of authors, etc.) relied on V.N. Polunina's legacy. The group of authors including I.A. Goryaeva, L.A. Nemenskaya, O.V. Ostrovskaya, and others created the program on Arts and Crafts for the general education school, which has been one of the leading programs from 1976 until present time (Programs of educational institutions. Fine arts and Crafts: 1-9 grades, 2011). The program by B.M. Nemensky suggests educating students on folk art with gradually increasing sophistication of tasks. Between the second and the fourth grades the program suggests studying fragmented aspects of Russian folk art; the emphasis here is placed on general imaginative and emotional experience with immersion in calendar folk festivals. The fifth-grade textbook is entirely devoted to decorative and applied arts as kind of art, which implies comprehensive studying the semantics of traditional dwelling, costume, decorative components of peasant art and products of traditional crafts (Dymkovo and Filimonovo clay toys, Gorodets painting, Bogorodskaya wooden carved toys, Zhostovo trays, Khokhloma wood painting, Gzhel ceramics).

The program by B.M. Nemensky had a great influence on the contents of state standards in Arts, which determined inclusion of its main content parts in the programs and textbooks of all authors of various kinds of teaching kits included in the state approved list. Many authors of these textbooks, such as T.A.Koptseva, E.I. Koroteeva, I.E. Kashekova and others worked with B.M.Nemensky at certain periods and shared with him common approaches to the interpretation of Russian folk traditional culture. In this regard, the textbooks by T.Ya. Shpikalova are of special interest: they are more focused on folk culture, with particular attention paid to exact reproduction of ancient models (Shpikalova and Ershova, n. d).

*Problem.* Describing Russian folk art in the aforementioned programs, the authors make an emphasis on general features typical for any other national type of traditional culture, such as traditions and variability, integral collective principles, connection to nature, the unity between the macrocosm of cosmic model of the universe and the microcosm of everyday life environment. The common features are again emphasised with respect to peculiarities of the

plastic form: the organic unity of the form and decorative components, the conventionality of ornament language, its symbolic meaning. One more common feature is the period of studying folk culture, which is elementary school or not later than the fifth grade of secondary school. A serious drawback here is the lack of links between studying folk culture and subsequent periods of studying history of national art. Some issues remain unresolved within the framework of the above described mainstream approach:

- Concrete peculiar features of Russian folk culture;
- The nature of Russian model of the universe as such, represented in the pieces of traditional folk culture;
- Peculiar features of national representations of matter, space and form as basic concepts of art;
- How the folk culture has an impact on subsequent national art history at the level of basic mentality.

At the same time, these issues are important not only in terms of explaining the peculiarities of Russian art to pupils, but also from the perspective of solving many methodological teaching problems. Among them one may face:

The issue of educating students on the national culture at mental level of form-creation;

Developing analytical operational body based on peculiarities of national representations on form-creation; the analytical operational body allows pupils to analyse the entire contents of Russian art from the perspective of belonging to national world view;

Identifying the most favourable periods from the perspective of developmental psychology for ingraining the foundations of national representations of ideas on form and matter;

Selection of art pieces appropriate in terms of the national type of form-creation.

Thus, the *purpose of our research* is:

To study Russian folk culture in order to determine the foundations and characteristics of the matrix of national form-creation;

To define pedagogical conditions for introducing this matrix into the practice of teaching Arts at general education school.

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## 2. Methods

### 2.1. Methods of studying Russian folk traditional culture

Analysing Russian folk culture, we rest upon the methodology of research in identifying internal structures of archetypal and mythological codes and their modelling within the framework of Historical Anthropology (C. Lévi-Strauss), Semiotics and Structuralism (V.S.Ivanov, Yu.M.Lotman, E.M.Meletinsky, V.Ya.Propp, V.N.Toporov, U.Eco), Culturology (G.D.Gachev), Psychology (C.G. Jung), Sociology of Everyday Culture (R.Bart, M.Eliade).

The following things are important for us while defining traditional folk culture: *Nationhood (narodnost')* i.e. functioning of traditional folk culture as an agent of personal self-identification with the people and national traditions; *Traditionalism* as "orientation to following established tradition, which implies certain cooperative, collectivist, communal, corporate, anonymous principles unifying the community" (Folk culture in Modern Conditions: Textbook); *Universality and syncretism*, associated with the fact that "traditional folk culture determines and normalises all aspects of community life: lifestyle, forms of economic activities, customs, rites, regulation of social relationships between members of the community, family type, child-rearing style, type of dwelling, using environment, type of clothing and nutrition, relationship with nature and the world, legends, beliefs, folk theories, knowledge, language, folklore as sign-oriented symbolic expression of tradition" (Mikhailova 1998). Comprehensive nature and

influence at subconscious level is a strong point of traditional folk culture for us. At the most understandable and, correspondingly, intelligible level, experiencing national identity occurs through the contact with fundamental layers of the collective unconscious of folk traditional culture, formed on the basis of mythological beliefs about the world. At the present, folk culture partially incorporated in the culture of everyday life can be regarded as an effective agent of national stereotypes of life activity, as well as navigator of people's orientation to corresponding cultural standards.

Constructing beliefs about matter and form is associated with deep mental processes; forming national matrices refers to the very foundations of our culture, to basic mythopoetic beliefs of our ancestors. For artistic education, which involves mastering the basics of creativity and knowledge about national and world culture by students, the structural codes associated with mythological picture of the world responsible for spatial and temporal model in national art are of paramount importance.

Our mythological spatial and temporal model of world-view was formed under the determining influence of the "encompassing" and "feeding" landscape. L.Gumilev wrote that "Motherland of the ethnos is the combination of landscapes, where it first build itself as a new system". And from this point of view, birch groves, high plains, quiet rivers of the Volga-Oka interfluvial area were equally important elements for the Great Russian ethnos building in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries along with Ugric-Slavic and Tatar-Slavic mixing, brought from Byzantium church architecture, bylina epos and fairy tales about magic wolves and foxes. And wherever the fate would take the Russian people to, they knew that they had "their place" - the Motherland" (Gumilev 1990). The vast spaces of the Great Russian Plain as well as the abundance of agricultural land and water resources consolidated the dominant position of **the Mother Damp Earth** archetype in the mythological world-view of our agriculturalist ancestors.

Features of the Mother Damp Earth archetype as the semantic core of the spatial and temporal mythological worldview model had an impact on:

The belief about properties of matter, as the basis of the universe, its structure, the relationship between matter and form, as well as about basic matrices of the material world;

The nature of the national spatial and temporal model;

On the nature of binary structural reference points of the national spatial and temporal world-view model (chaos/space, centre/periphery, inner/outer, sacral/secular, upper world/earth/lower world, eternal/ephemeral);

On the beliefs about the interrelationship of elements (earth, water, air, fire) in the mythological belief about the universe;

On the relative location of the main topographic components of the mythological world-view (the World Tree, the World Mountain, the World Fence, Road, the World Ocean).

The aggregate of the mentioned factors formed the following structures:

Basic principles of form-creation in Russian art on the whole;

The principles of relationship between architecture and the natural environment;

System of images and symbolism of the architecture of the national dwelling, its pieces, arts and crafts, folk costumes, etc.

Basic compositional matrices in all art forms;

Methods of implementing ethical and aesthetic principles in art.

In order to reveal the national features of Russian culture at the level of perceiving matter and form, space and time, it is necessary to examine more thoroughly the different aspects of the Mother Damp Earth image.

The Mother Damp Earth is a variant of the universal archetype of Mother Goddess. According to C.G. Jung "Like any other archetype, the mother archetype appears under an almost infinite

variety of aspects. ... she can be ancestress ... the goddess, and especially the Mother of God, the Virgin, and Sophia. Mythology offers many variations of the mother archetype, as for instance the mother who reappears as the maiden in the myth of Demeter and Kore; or the mother who is also the beloved, as in the Cybele-Attis myth. ... the goal of our longing for redemption, such as Paradise, the Kingdom of God, the Heavenly Jerusalem. Many things arousing devotion or feelings of awe, as for instance the Church, university, city or country, heaven, earth, the woods, the sea or any still waters, matter even, the underworld and the moon can be mother-symbols. The archetype is often associated with things and places standing for fertility and fruitfulness: the cornucopia, a ploughed field, a garden. It can be attached to a rock, a cave, a tree, a spring, a deep well, or to various vessels such as the baptismal font, or to vessel-shaped flowers like the rose or the lotus. Because of the protection it implies, the magic circle or mandala can be a form of mother archetype. Hollow objects such as ovens and cooking vessels are associated with the mother archetype, and, of course, the uterus, yoni, and anything of alike shape. Added to this list there are many animals, such as the cow, hare, and helpful animals in general. ... The qualities associated with it are maternal solicitude and sympathy; the magic authority of the female; the wisdom and spiritual exaltation that transcend reason; any helpful instinct or impulse; all that is benign, all that cherishes and sustains, that fosters growth and fertility. The place of magic transformation and rebirth, together with the underworld and its inhabitants, are presided over by the mother. On the negative side the mother archetype may connote anything secret, hidden, dark; the abyss, the world of the dead, anything that devours, seduces, and poisons, that is terrifying and inescapable like fate" (Jung 2005).

The range of aspects of the mother archetype according to C. G. Jung is large. K. Jung thought that "the Urania type of mother-image predominates in masculine psychology, whereas in a woman the chthonic type, or Earth Mother, is the most frequent" (Jung 1996).

The Mother Damp Earth is associated with female type of the world-view, and the chthonic aspects point to its connections with primordial chaos.

According to V.N. Toporov the characteristics of primordial chaos are as follows: "the connection of the chaos with the water element, infinity in time and space, dissociation up to vacuum or, on the contrary, the mixture of all elements (the amorphous state of matter, ruling out both the existence of objects and elements as well as the basic parameters of the world taken separately), disorder, and, therefore, maximised entropic trends, i.e. chaos is absolutely beyond the sphere of the predictable (total randomness, ruling out the category of causality) ... But perhaps the most important feature of chaos is its role of the womb in which the world is born; the existence of some energy in it which leads to procreation" (Toporov 1982).

A.F. Losev emphasised that "chaos reveals everything and unfolds everything, gives everything a chance to come outside: but at the same time it absorbs everything ... chaos is represented as ... the image of cosmic primordiality, where all being from which it appears and in which it dies melts; therefore, chaos is the universal principle of uninterrupted and continuous, infinite and boundless formation" (Losev 1982). Losev believed that important property of mythological characters closely associated with chaos (like two-faced Janus) was the preservation of their ability to restore the syncretic integrity and "capability to see everything forward and backward."

The association of the Mother Damp Earth with chaos, first of all, affected our ancestors' beliefs about matter, its structure, the relationship between matter and form, and matrices of the material world.

## 2.2. The belief about matter

The association with water fixed in the name of the Mother Damp Earth determined in the national belief about matter such its features as **fluidity and mobility**. M.M. Makovsky finds confirmation of the idea that in ancient times the concept of the Earth was associated with the

concept of motion, "the earth was regarded as quicksand", suggesting to compare words etymologically "in Russian - earth *zemlya*, in Ancient Indian: *kṣam-*, but in English *skim* means "to go or move quickly and lightly over or on a surface" (Makovsky 2000).

"Mythopoetic image of weaving and plaiting of water, the image of water as a net is transferred from the related water element to the concept of "damp earth"- compare: in Indo-European \**yer* means "to bind, twist", but in Tocharian (A) *war* is "water", in Indo-European \**seu* means - "humidity, dampness" but in Indo-European \**seu* means "curve, twist" (Mikhailova 1998). Accordingly, the image of endless weaving and net without beginning and end becomes more important for the representation of matter.

The proximity to water, chaos, matter, earth determines, on the one hand, belief about its **amorphousness and poor structure**, and, on the other hand, its orientation towards **integrity and indivisibility**.

The chthonic nature of the Mother Damp Earth and, correspondingly, its ability to create in the paradigm of chaos, in which everything is mixed with everything, has preserved in our ancestors beliefs about such matter's abilities as **spontaneity and combining inconsistent things**.

V.N.Toporov's reconstruction of Slavic mythological image of the Mother Damp Earth emphasises that in spatial respect it is most often described by the following expressions: "stands under people, lies, goes, carries, holds, covers, presses, comes apart, diverges" (Toporov 2000), which emphasises its horizontal position. Additional meaningful characteristic is that the Mother Earth is interpreted as "large, broad (broader than anything else)" (Toporov 2000). He emphasises the Mother Earth's passive role in conception in comparison to the Father-Heaven; and its more active role in bearing the fruit, in the act of birth and further taking care of everything that was born. In terms of beliefs about matter, one can say that the image of **passive horizontally oriented matter with endless parameters along the flat surface** was initially established in the national consciousness.

The focus on the elements of the earth, as well as on Mother Goddess' flesh in her own name determined the perception of matter as something temporal and impermanent, eternally changing in the cycle of being (Russian: *zemlya* (*land*), but in Tocharian (A) (*kem* means *bad*; in English *land* , but in Russian dialect *lyada* means *disease*) (Makovsky 2000; Makovsky 1996).

### 2.3. Representations of form

The belief about amorphous nature of matter generated the paradigm of **holistic syncretic form, somewhat dissociated and slightly structured** form in which matter tends to preserve its original whole mass of "colossus and impersonal pile" (Losev 1982), **i.e. massiveness**.

Semantically syncretic form-creation caused **the combination of the opposite parameters of spatial and temporal model in single form** (top and bottom, beginning and end) **the emergence of hybrid fantastical images combining representatives of different domains of the universe** (animals and plants, humans and animals, etc.)

The fluidity and mobility of matter, as well as focus on the earth element determined not only choice in favour of soft materials such as clay and wood, but also choice in favour of using the paradigm of **soft materials' form-creation** in dealing with strong materials like stone or metal.

The above mentioned idea of the passivity of matter did not mean almightiness for external creative energy, because construction of any structure was limited by fixed matrices of the Mother Damp Earth itself which in terms of form manifested itself in the predominance of **horizontal orientation, the extension of forms**. According to C.G.Jung, choice was mainly made in favour of **female form matrix - the hollow form oriented at universal lower**

**stratum.** G.D.Gachev proposed vector with lemniscate " $\rightarrow \infty$ " (Gachev 2004; Goryaeva 2011) as a graphic symbol of the Russian spatial model as a whole.

The focus on maternal function included in the name (*mat'* (mother), *matushka* (Mummy), Mother Damp Earth, Mummy Damp Earth, common mother) emphasised the circle/sphere as an ancient symbol of mother (compare: in Indo-European \* *mater* means *mother*, but in old Indian *mandala* means *circle*) (Makovsky 2000).

The totality of the Earth as mother which in terms of language manifested itself in one-base origin of the words *mat'* ("mother") and *matka* ("womb"), determined the nature of the forming matrix aimed at creating structures predominantly **enveloping like uterus, as well as labyrinthine structures with focus on inner space.**

The concept of infinity was expressed through such compositional solutions as circular compositions, infinitely repeated patterns, pieces of wickerwork, herbal ornaments, etc.

### **Expression of beliefs about matter and form in the peculiar nature of Russian art.**

Matter's fluidity and mobility, its ability to be spontaneous was especially evident in the sacred images of the Mother Goddess herself - from ancient sculptures of the 11th and 12th centuries found in Kiev to the modern figures of young ladies (*baryshnya*) and women (*baba*) of various folk traditional crafts schools. Toys from the village of Karachun (fish, goats and women, bell "Karachunskaya baba") outstand with their special smooth fluidity. Pleshkovskaya toy demonstrates matter's ability to spontaneous outbursts in different directions. Dymkovo and Kargopol toys have monolithic fundamental form, despite their small size.

Form-creation in the domains of subjects also demonstrates the primacy of single matter **with weak differentiation of forms**, with orientation to **inversion of upper and lower strata.**

Comparative analysis of Slavic ceramics of the early Middle Ages and antique vessels straight away indicates such peculiar feature of Russian ceramics as its monolithic syncretic form. This is evidenced by integrity of the silhouette of pots, large clay pots (*korchaga*) and jugs, the absence of foot in the vessel, smooth boundaries between the body and the neck, handles' seamless growth from the body of pottery. The form flows rather than divides into parts.

Predominant choice in favour of "female" type of vessels is also meaningful: the vessel form has an emphasis on the bottom part of its body, an element separating it from the earth is absent, there are also many flat dishes such as bowls, saucers and plates. Ritual dishes like *konukh* and *skopar'* (scoops) which have form of sunny horse with a disc on the chest who merges into single shape with the body of duck or, alternatively, the duck body is painted red which demonstrates inverse relation to the concepts of top and bottom and underlines the corresponding mythological formula of the sun dissolved in the waters of the first creation.

**The weak differentiation of matter** conditioned by the archaic image of the Mother Damp Earth laid the foundations of material robustness and integrity of volumes in the context of the weak structuredness of Russian stone architecture, the most striking example of which is represented by the churches of Novgorod school. Monolithic burial mounds such as the Black Grave which can be called models of the natural architecture of the Mother Earth itself initially had an impact on the compactness of the general silhouette of Sophia of Kiev, and then, as a result of long-term influence of national thinking on the crossed-dome plan, led to the appearance of Novgorod and Pskov church monoliths (St. George church in the Staraya Ladoga). Much later, in the era of modernity, N.Roerich reproduced the principle of coating layers of earth as if in the course of geological process of building hill landforms through the formidable volumes of the Church of the Holy Spirit in Talashkino. Russian masters of land art returned to ancient archetypes of the "earth architecture" while creating objects in the art park of the village of Nikola-Lenivets conservation area (Kaluga region). In 2010 kurgan-like art object "Pit of Babylon" or "Falling into Well" was created, in which the earthy forms of kurgan were combined with an earthen funnel. Each visitor could enter the funnel and then deepen it by digging out a bucket of soil and carrying it out to the surface. According to the authors, the principal idea behind interaction with the art object was the opportunity for human body to be



in the body of the earth with the chance to fall into the well and to see the sky full of stars from there.

Form-creation matrix of round **uterus-like structures** initially formed a closed composition of peasant farms, and then it had an influence on the choice of centric forms for the crossed-dome plan of the Orthodox church (the Church of the Intercession on the Nerl) and the church-like forms of classical estates of the Palladian type (Pavlovsk Palace, Ch.Cameron). While building his private house in the Arbat in Moscow constructivist architect K.Melnikov doubled the circle making two cylinders overlap each other. The ancient mythologeme of procreating uterus is reproduced in the organization of the conservation area in the village of Nikola-Lenivets: in the center of the village there is Rotunda (architect A. Brodsky) - the oval-shaped building with many doors and windows open to all directions of the world. In the same art-space of Nikola-Lenivets, N.Polissky erected the hemisphere of "Universal Mind", whereas V. Savinkin and V.Kuzmin created hemispherical hollow of "Nicholas' ear": one may enter into its cavity to listen to the original silence of the universe.

**The generating power of** the Mother Earth, its ability to be generously covered with various forms of flowering life, determined the primacy of decor over construction in the Russian church (churches of the 16th-17th centuries) and palatial architecture (Naryshkin and Elizabethan baroque). Decorative design principles of architecture and material microcosm are directly associated with continuous ornamenting of the matter of being. Predominantly vegetative, "herbal", and therefore, the trailing endless nature of the ornament pattern, as well as horizontal character of its placement coincide with horizontal orientation of the spatial national model and also with the idea of the absence of borders in this model (The Church of Tikhvin Icon of our Lady in Spasskaya Sloboda in Yaroslavl, the Church of John Chrysostom in Korovniki in Yaroslavl, Krutitsy Metochion in Moscow).

The horizontal orientation of the model formed **horizontal/vertical paradox of form-creation** in traditional wooden architecture: the vertical growth is achieved by means of putting multiple horizontal structures on one another. Building vertical constructions of izba or traditional wooden church is carried out by means of lengthening timber sets. This national characteristic of thinking is especially remarkable when comparing the Russian wooden church and the Scandinavian stave church; the walls of the latter were constructed from vertically placed logs. The tradition appeared to be so persistent that it was reproduced by French architect [Jean-Michel Wilmott](#) in the course of constructing Holy Trinity Cathedral of the Russian Spiritual and Cultural Centre in Paris commissioned by the Russian government. Horizontal-vertical paradox was very accurately reproduced by the authors of "Lazy Ziggurat" art object in the art park of the village of Nikola-Lenivets conservation area (Kaluga region). Incomplete forms of the tower demonstrate the very process of infinite growth of the vertical structures by building up the horizontal structures step by step up to the skies .... Horizontal structures played the role of restraining factor afterwards while developing any architectural styles. The balanced harmony of the Russian version of crossed-dome church stems from its influence. The imperative of horizontal structures embodies in power of endless length of the monastery walls, which damps down the vertical bursts of towers (two kilometres long walls of the Kirillo-Belozersky Monastery). In palace architecture, the presentability of power was conceptualised through the immense length of royal residences' facades (the Tsarskoye Selo Palace, F.B.Rastrelli) and state institutions (The Admiralty building in St. Petersburg, A.D.Zakharov).

**Methods of studying effectiveness of the suggested model of studying Russian art based on operators of the mythological spatial model.** The following methods were used in the study: The observation method in the course of natural experiment implied long-term examination of objects in natural circumstances along with with description of non-quantitative characteristics. We documented direct observations of pupils during classes, questions, the nature of answers, school children's activities in the course of listening or performing tasks, the initial level or family "cultural capital", the dynamics of development, pupils' achievements, age classification, objective and subjective assessment of acquired knowledge and skills, reaction to

given training conditions, the outcome of creative or research activities, self-reflection on proposed teaching methods.

At the last training stage, in-depth interview with alumni was conducted, which according to Russian sociological classification is a kind of informal interviews. The transcripts of conducted interview contained unrestricted recollections of the aesthetic cycle classes, which enabled us to identify the moments that had the greatest subjective value for the pupils.

The development of visual thinking and creative potential at different stages of the experiment and in different age groups was documented with different methods, including the E. Torrance test and "hidden images" tests. While carrying out qualitative analysis of children's works, we took scale of analytics from Study of Art (formal, iconological, semantic analysis) as the basis for formal analysis and analysis of meaning of pictures collected at different times and in different schools (shared folders from particular groups or individual portfolios). Semantic analysis and analysis of meaning assumes that at the very least children have or lack their own work program; the plot is singular or plot lines are hierarchical; there is coherence or a range of semantic levels; semantically rich and associative visualisation is used; there are archetypal images and mythologems in the work.

**Pedagogical conditions of exposing children of different age categories to values of national folk culture based on the mythological spatial and temporal model.** Research findings revealed that the optimal structure assumes division into four levels.

At kindergarten and elementary school level, it is advisable to expose children to the principles of national form-creation at the level of observing things (traditional craft toys, household items in traditional Russian house) as well as of working with soft plastic materials such as dough, clay, and cloth.

At the level of the fifth grade, it is appropriate to expose children to the concepts regarding structure and topography of mythological spatial and temporal model in different metaphorical codes, as well as to the data on the main characters of pagan mythology.

Pupils of the sixth grade are capable of understanding the central mythological image of the Mother Damp Earth as a source of images of traditional culture (home as a microcosm, village as a reflection of the macrocosm, clothing and the semantics of ornament).

Pupils of the seventh-ninth grades understand the influence of national thinking formed by traditional culture on the special nature of Russian national art from ancient times up to the present day (national architecture, national landscape, portraiture, still life, genre painting).

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### 3. Results

*Research Stages.* Research on the pedagogical conceptual foundations of continuous teaching of national culture based on fundamental mythological constants of traditional folk culture has been carried out for 17 years - from 2000 to 2017. The research dealt with both teachers and pupils. The areas of tension and main contradictions arising in the course of teaching Russian traditional folk culture were identified at the first stage, within the framework of the diagnostic experiment (1997-2000) in which pupils from three schools took part.

At the second stage (2000-2012) the model was tested based on the programs developed by the author for career enhancement training courses for teachers of Arts arranged in the Russian Academy of Education "Institute of Art Education", as well as at distance training courses for teachers of Arts at the Institute of Art Education and Pedagogical University "The First of September". At the same period, experimental examination of the model effectiveness was carried out at all levels of general education school in accordance with the author's programs: "How to awaken an artist in the child: developing creative abilities based on the art archetypes", "Myth and Culture", "Language and Culture". Testing took place in State Educational Institution "Gymnasium No. 1529" (Moscow), State Educational Institution "School-Kindergarten No.1659" (Moscow), Private Educational Institution "XXIth century" (Moscow),

Private Educational Institution "Dialogue" (Moscow region).

At the third stage (2012-2017) the experiment covered all-Russian level. The introduction of the model is carried out based on the teaching kit "Arts: textbook for pupils of educational institutions" for fifth-ninth graders, developed by the group of authors including the author of the current study (Yermolinskaya 2015). Educating teachers on the paradigm of continuous teaching of folk culture on the basis of mythological constants takes place at face-to-face and on-line seminars. Positive expert evaluation by the teachers who chose this teaching kit has recently become the main indicator of the implemented study success. The geographic coverage of face-to-face seminars is quite extensive. They took place in Moscow (2003-2017) and Saint-Petersburg (2017), Taganrog (2012), Saratov (2013), Chelyabinsk (2014), Orenburg (2015), Stary Oskol (2015), Kursk (2016), Yekaterinburg (2016), Ulyanovsk (2016), Kirov (2017), Lipetsk (2017), Astrakhan (2017), Yaroslavl (2016,2017). The webinars covered even wider area: Siberia (Krasnoyarsk, Irkutsk), the Far East (Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky, Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk) and the CIS countries (Belarus, Kazakhstan).

*Experiment with teachers.* We made conclusions based on the practice of training 1240 people at face-to-face and on-line career enhancement training courses for teachers organised by "Institute of Art Education" and Pedagogical University "The First of September". At the final stage of the experiment, we made comparative analysis of lesson plans by teachers who took career enhancement training courses in 2009/2010 (experimental group - EG) and the same number of lesson plans by participants of pedagogical ideas festival "Open Lesson" 2009/2010 (control group - CG).

*Experiment with pupils.* Long-term full cycle natural experiment was conducted with pupil cohort from the first to the eleventh grade (1999-2010) in private educational institution school "XXI century". At state educational institution "School-Kindergarten No.1659" advanced training experimental groups were organized; project based learning was practised there allocating for Arts 6 hours instead of standard 2 hours every week. At the last stage, the results of work by pilot educational institutions were compared with the outcomes achieved by schools operating according to standard programs.

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## **4. Discussion**

### **4.1. Outcomes of experiment with teachers**

Analysis of lesson plans demonstrated that teachers in EG increased special literature list by 27%; number of references to cross-cultural parallels by 55%; share of lessons with heuristic plan by 52%. The number of analytical methods used to study artistic culture increased by four times. Qualitative analysis of lesson plans shows that there is a shift in lesson focus from simple periodization into epochs towards issues of special nature of the studied Russian art phenomena, internal causes for their evolution, their derivative, typological and archetypal links. The methods of structuring the lesson contents which are not peculiar to art are replaced by the principle of lesson developing based on original universals of the national culture. The mechanical combination of different forms of art is replaced by the principle of inner commonality of symbolic codes. Passive methods of plot or formal description give way to dynamic comparison, search for typological and structural analogies, ways of transcoding culture patterns. An important indicator of improving teacher training quality included not only meticulous work on national component based on the mythological national mentality, but also the cross-cultural orientation of lesson themes which include, for instance, "From Chaos to Form. The origin of the world in the folklore of the Shorians (T.I.Zelentsova ), "The Hut for Baba Yaga. Ugric Component in the Slavic culture" (A.G.Lesnikov), "Traditional Wedding Doll and the World Tree" (O.V.Yeliseeva), etc.

### **4.2. Outcomes of experiment with pupils**

The development of visual thinking and creative potential at different stages of the experiment in elementary school was documented with different methods, including E.Torrance test. After the first year of teaching, we revealed excess of normal indicators in EG according to all parameters - fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration. The indicators of growth in terms of such parameter as "elaboration" were especially high, having grown almost twice compared to normal ones (by 85.7%). For us, "elaboration" parameters are especially important, since they assume that there is substantial, hierarchically structured solution to given theme, which indicates pupils' increased ability to suggest their original, well-considered and detailed version of the given model, in other words, to work in the mode of experimental development of the model. The trend of high indices with respect to "elaboration" parameter persisted both in the second (88.7%) and in third (55.4%) grades.

At the level of senior high school, drawing tests were used: the subjects were asked to find "hidden", ciphered images in order to measure the development of their visual thinking. The test with the working title "Mother Goddess" contained several images of this archetypal character. On a fresco from Fez depicting mountain landscape with lilies and swallows, the silhouette of stunning mountains corresponds to the scheme of Mother Goddess with hands raised in prayer; the swallows (zoomorphic attribute of the goddess) confirm her latent presence; in the photo of Russian folk piece of embroidery, she is in the posture of woman in labour forms tree-like pattern; in the photograph of the interior of refectory in a northern Russian church, her figure is reproduced in the form of pillars with elliptic corbels. For children who studied Art not according to our programs, the Cretan fresco is simply a landscape painting (100%), embroidery piece is just some pattern. The pillars were compared with female figure by 20% of the tested children, often with reference to similar image of the ancient Greek column. Up to 80% of children in the EG noticed the presence of the goddess in the landscape painting and associated it with the equally abstract image of Slavic goddess Makosh. They referred to the same image looking at pieces of embroidery (50% of correct answers) and architecture (95%), which means increased competence and orientation at system of images in the Russian mythology and folk culture.

The graduates' essays on Russian art works demonstrated the productive capacity of the method of reliance on mythological codes and images. Essays require applying qualitative analysis, so we give only two examples here. The first essay by S. Shaginyan on the picture "Landscape on the Don" by K.S.Petrov-Vodkin is an obvious example of understanding the inversive syncretic nature of the national vision of the world and the art ability to carry out total mythological animation of nature: "River, trees, paths. In the canvas, there is no sky, but the river is so blue that it looks like it is a fallen blue sky crystal which animates the entire landscape. It is like the eye of God and the trees look like curly hair. The paths is smile of nature. The nature is a human being. Like us it also worries, it knows how to smile and be sad, to rejoice and to sorrow. The heart of nature is the sun. When the sun rejoices, it goes out and freely floats across the sky; but here it is hiding in the colours of the earth." The analysis of picture "Pan" by M.Vrubel by P. Pilkh demonstrates the skill to find Russian national features even in the ancient Greek image: "The picture "Pan" depicts an ancient Greek god, Hermes' child, who, according to the myth, put simultaneously gaiety and horror into people; fear appeared when he whistled. Here, one can draw an analogy with Slavic mythology in which the Nightingale the robber had approximately the same properties. Vrubel all along returns to Russian images including landscape with birches in which he placed his character, crescent descending behind the forest, unlimited distance. Pan himself looks like *Domovoy* (male household spirit) or more like *yurodivy* (holy fool) judging by the look in which both sadness and insanity are seen. His eyes are as if he sucks the soul. Just like Esenin's "Vistas blue that suck the eyes."

The prolonged observation revealed completely unexpected evidence of our teaching model effectiveness at the earliest stages of the experiment in gymnasium No. 1529. This evidence was the recollection post from the Internet blog by a gymnasium alumna, a modern young

playwright Nina Belenitskaya. In addition to memories on making three-D dolls for the production of "the Snow Queen" (the work was preserved up to the present day), she notes that Art lessons integrated with studying mythology were especially interesting for her. N. Belenitskaya is a playwright whose work sparked modern theatre and film directors' interest: "Neverland", 2002 (Open Competition of Young Playwrights "Premiere.txt", director A. Khukhrin); "Letters to Daddy", 2003 (Lyubimovka Festival of Young Playwrights, director Tatyana Kopylova); "03", 2003 (Short-list of the Second International Playwrights Contest "Eurasia" in the nomination "Play on Free Theme"); "Tail of Fairy", 2004 (First award at the contest "New Style" in the nomination "Play for Children"); "Transit", 2005 ("Novation" nomination at the festival "Golden Mask" -2007); "Mother's Instinct", 2007 (Lyubimovka Festival of Young Playwrights, director G. Zhzhenko), "Pavlik my god", 2007 (short-list of the Second International Playwrights Contest "Eurasia" in the nomination "Play on free theme") ; "On your doorstep", 2007 (Third Prize at the Third International Contest of Contemporary Drama "Free Theatre", Belarus).

One more alumna of gymnasium No. 1529, a ceramist Vasilisa Kozmenko is also involved in creative activities and intensively uses mythological Slavic images in her work. In particular, she used the image of Makosh for the performance of creating ceramic sculpture of the goddess and her subsequent return to the natural environment.

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## 5. Conclusion

The conducted research confirms the effectiveness of our approach to teaching Russian folk traditional culture from the perspective of its basic archetypal and mythological structures. On the one hand, it allows to expose pupils to national culture at the mental level of form-creation and, on the other hand, to make Art lessons emotional and informative to larger degree, to develop creative abilities in children, to make them continuers and co-creators of the national tradition at the present stage of cultural development.

Developing analytical operational body based on peculiarities of national representations on form-creation enables one to represent the entire spectrum of national art from ancient times up to the present day as integrated continuous whole; the analytical operational body allows pupils to analyse the entire contents of Russian art from the perspective of belonging to national worldview. The operational body itself based on the image-bearing structures of the myth reaches pupils and promotes their intellectual and creative development.

Our approach implying rest on mythological structures allows us to determine the optimum age stages of interaction with Russian cultural phenomena as well as best selection of works in terms of content.

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