

TEACHING METHODS AND PEDAGOGICAL IDEAS OF
PAVEL PETROVICH CHISTYAKOV –
A TALENTED RUSSIAN ARTIST AND EXCEPTIONAL ART EDUCATOR

By

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STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

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ABSTRACT

The following paper is an opportunity for me to introduce Pavel Petrovich Chistyakov and his pedagogical ideas to English-speaking educators. His life's accomplishments seem even more remarkable when considering the fact that he was born into a family of serfs and later became a professor at the Russian Academy of Fine Arts. Among his students were well-known Russian artists such as Valentin Serov, Mikhail Vrubel, Vasily Surikov, Victor Vasnetsov, and Vasily Polenov. In this paper, I present you with a brief analytical summary of his methodology on teaching drawing and painting, his pedagogical approaches, as well as his ideas on the development of art education in the public school setting. Chistyakov's pedagogical system still seems relevant today and, with slight adjustments, can be adapted to various teaching situations depending on the educational environment and students' abilities.

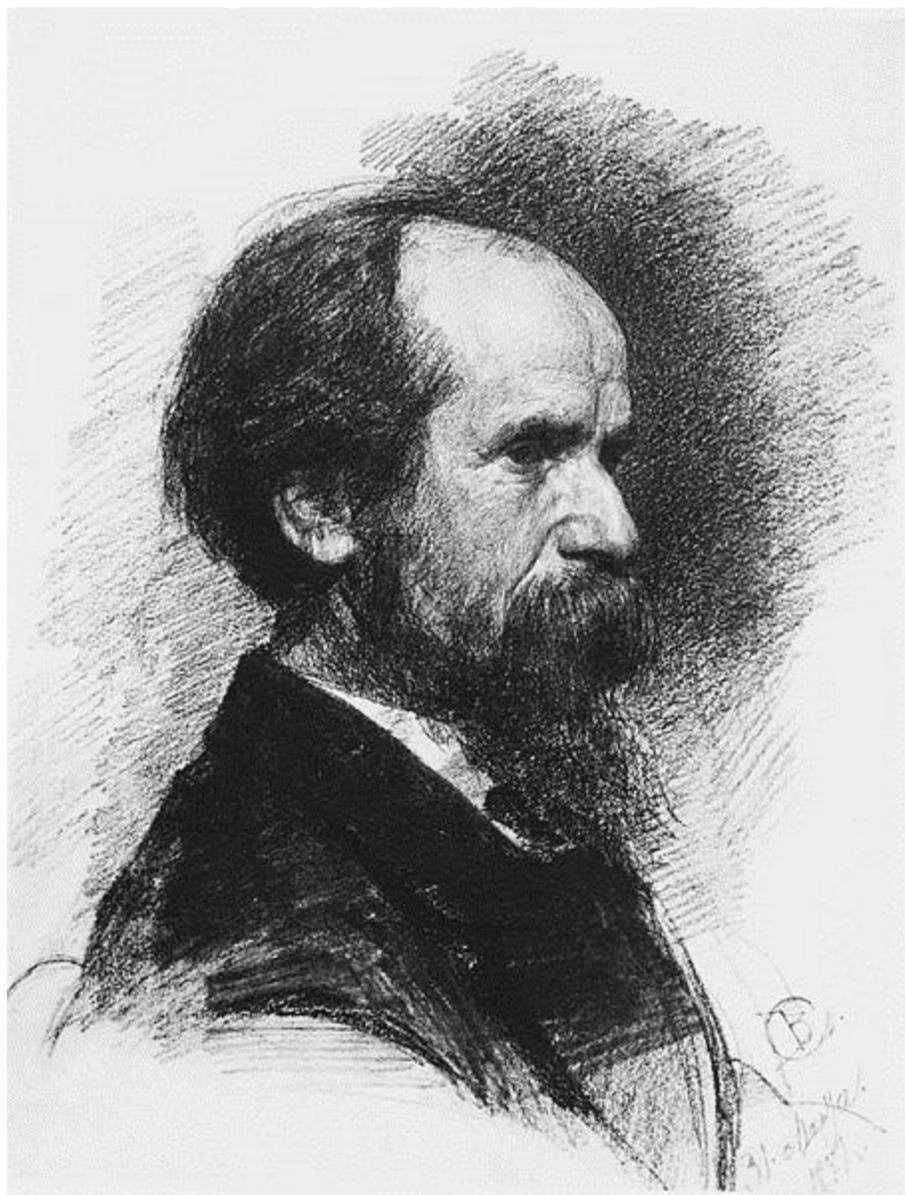


Figure 1: Serov, P. P. Chistyakov, 1881

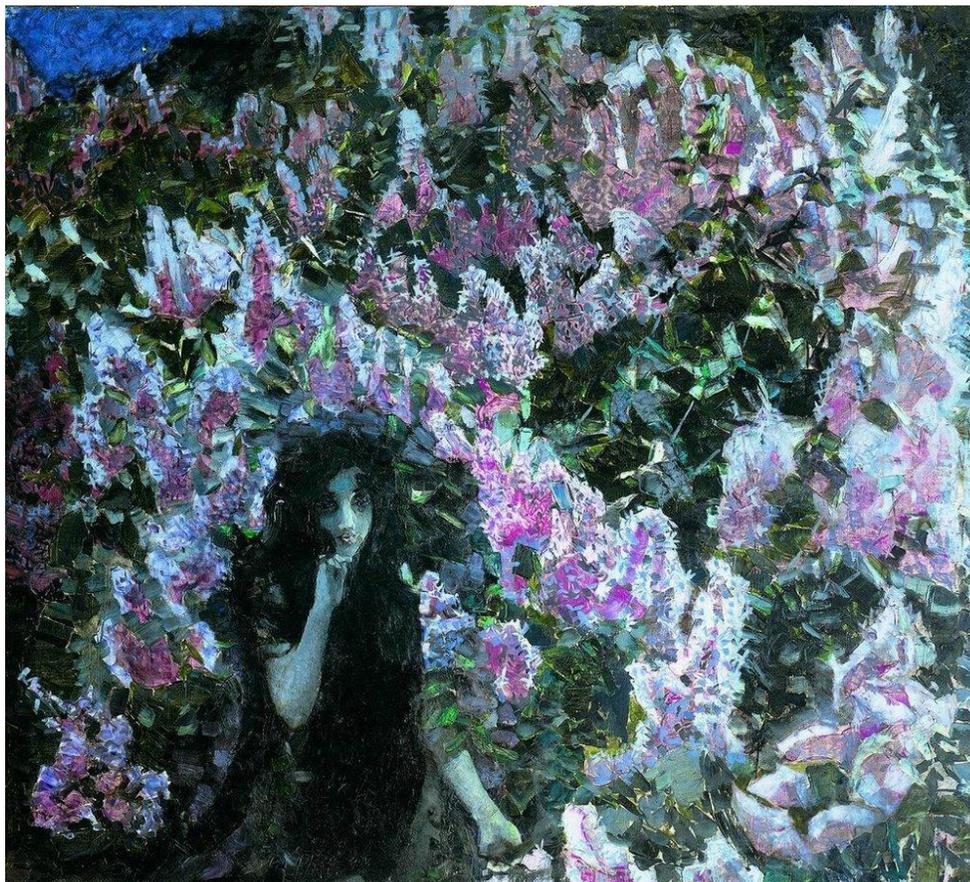


Figure 2: Vrubel, Lilacs, 1900.



Figure 3: Serov, *Children*, 1899.



Figure 4: Vasnetcov, Bogatyri, 1898



Figure 5: Surikov, The Morning of the Execution of Streltsy, 1881.



Figure 6: Polenov, Moscow Backyard, 1877

INTRODUCTION

Every time I return to Moscow, my home city, I try to find at least a couple of hours for a visit to one of my favorite museums – the Tretyakov State Gallery. It houses one of the largest collections of Russian art. As you move from one hall to the next, the history of Russian art and the country itself unfolds in front of you. There are a few halls where I prefer to stay longer, the artworks displayed there were made by my most beloved Russian artists. I adore the mysterious and expressive paintings of Michail Vrubel (Figure 2), the beautiful and thoughtful portraits of Valentin Serov (Figure 3), the works of Viktor Vasnetcov which are filled with Russian history and folklore (Figure 4), the dramatically composed paintings of Vasilyi Surikov (Figure 5) and the warm and inviting landscapes of Vasilyi Polenov (Figure 6)¹.

It feels as if these artists have always been a part of my life. I remember studying their work at school and in college, trying to go to every possible exhibition. My art school was named after Valentin Serov, and we spent a lot of time researching his work and his artistic methods. One summer our plein air practice was held at the former estate of Vasilyi Polenov, which became a museum after the artist's death. We had a unique opportunity to research Polenov's work at the estate's museum and then paint our own landscapes on the grounds of this beautiful estate. It formed a very special creative atmosphere and the whole experience was unforgettable. For one of my birthdays, my parents gave me a gorgeous and rare album of Michail Vrubel's reproductions, and I still

¹ Figures 1- 7, 9, 14 (<http://ru.wikipedia.org>).

Figures 8, 10 – 13 (*P. P. Chistyakov theoretic i Pedagog* by Moleva and Beliutin (1953)).

have it with me; it was among the books that I was able to bring with me from Russia and now I look through it from time to time with my children.

When I think about it, these artists have always been a part of my own history in art. But only a few years ago, I found out that all these famous and vastly different painters, as well as many other very well-known Russian artists (Ivanov, 2003), had been the students of the same Academy professor – Pavel Petrovich Chistyakov².

I remember learning a little bit about Chistyakov in my art history classes, but never realized that so many prominent Russian artists used to be his students. Some of them, like Vrubel and Serov, had a huge impact on the development of Russian art with their artistic talent and innovations (Dmitrieva, 1990; Reeder, 1976). Others like Repin, Vasnecov, Surikov and Polenov played a role in Russian society not only as artists, but also as important art educators (Rostovtsev, 1982; Valkenier, 1990).

Certainly a question came to my mind: what was so special about Professor Pavel Chistyakov that enabled him to raise such an impressive amount of successful artists and art educators? This was the starting point of my research – my personal curiosity about him as a teacher of my favorite artists. Diana Korzenik (1985; 1986) suggests that personal motives play a certain role in doing historical research. She also refers to Karen Hamblen (1986), who concludes that “the ebb and flow of different research topics result from a shifting combination of professional priorities, influences from previously published research, and personal interest” (Korzenik, 1990, p. 49).

² Further in my paper I intend to use several different variations of Professor Chistyakov’s name: Chistyakov, Pavel Chistyakov, Pavel Petrovich and Pavel Petrovich Chistyakov. Although all these variations are appropriate in Russian language usage, the form consisting of the first and middle names (Pavel Petrovich) is the one most commonly used when a student addresses his teacher.

As an art teacher I became extremely interested in Chistyakov's teaching methods and pedagogical approaches. I started looking for more information and found out that in addition to being a professor at the Russian Academy of Fine Arts, Chistyakov was also very concerned with the quality of art education in public schools. His background as a peasant's son who made his way to the top of Russian art world is very impressive and sets him apart from the other faculty at the Academy. Overall, it seems that he was definitely an extraordinary person, and talented artist, who played an important part in the development of Russian art education.

To my surprise it was rather difficult to collect evidence about Pavel Chistyakov, at least here in the United States. There are a number of very similar articles dedicated to him on the internet, but very few serious published works. Most of published manuscripts are dated back to the 1940s and 1950s. There is one recent book about the artist (Churilova, 2007), but it pays attention to only one particular period of his life.

On the other hand, I noticed that Chistyakov's educational methods have been mentioned in a number of contemporary publications on art education (Arhipov, 2011; Li, 2012; Rostovtcev, 1984; Savinov, 2010). There is an art school in Ekaterinburg, Russia that has carried Chistyakov's name since 1946, and the faculty members of this school are devoted to his artistic and educational ideas and beliefs. Evidently, Pavel Chistyakov is still remembered and valued among Russian art educators.

In Western literature Chistykov is vaguely mentioned only in relevance to his famous students (Reeder, 1976; Valkenier, 1990), which is not surprising. From my reading experience, literature on Russian education, in general, and art education in

particular, is virtually absent from Western educational publications. This can be said about both the past and present.

Rationale

My study on Pavel Chistyakov is a historical case study. As any historical research it can help art educators to better understand not only how the field of art education was shaped in Russia, but hopefully also to “form the background of issues and events that affect the teaching of art today” (Efland, 1990, p. 7). And this can be applied not only to Russia but to any other country whose educational system takes its roots in European educational traditions.

With my research I’m not aiming to present lots of generalizations. I intend to focus on the pedagogical practices of one particular art professor. Harold Silver (1992) challenged historians to stop focusing on the institutional development of schools and to focus, instead, on the people who inhabited these structures and what these people experienced (cited in de Marrais and Lapan, 2004, p. 41). Lynn Beudert (2006), in her book dedicated to art educators, also talks about the importance of examining the lives of these educators in order to develop better understandings within the field. Each story counts, even though my research is about a person from the past rather than a contemporary art educator. Chistyakov’s life was already accomplished and some results of his teaching are quite obvious, so I believe that we can learn much from him. By results I mean the artistic and educational careers of his students.

Pavel Chistyakov was a professor of the Russian Academy of Fine Arts in the second part of the nineteenth century. Thus, he was teaching future professional artists. I agree with Steven Madoff (2009) when he states that professional art programs can be

considered successful, “if they guide young artists into the right artistic production processes for them: this match between talent (creative intelligence and skills) and old and new mediums is what gradually helps them to achieve their unique voice” and “to sustain art making for a life time” (p. 13). In the case of Chistyakov, it is quite clear that he managed to fulfill Madoff’s “requirement”: many of his students were not only able to create amazing artworks that ended up in museums, but also affected the art world as teachers and active members of society.

When Bolotin Joseph (2010) discusses teachers as a fourth curricular component, she underlines such educators’ qualities as subject matter erudition, and teachers’ personalities, biases and political stances (p. 12). In my research I’m planning to concentrate as much as possible on Pavel Chistyakov’s artistic theories, his personal pedagogical methods, and his forms of communication with students. Although I believe that analysis of prominent educators’ work tells us a lot about “good teaching”, I don’t mean to discuss his practices directly as “good teaching” because of the subjectivity and vagueness of this term. *I simply intend to analyze his pedagogical methods and theoretical views in order to help me and my readers understand the huge success of his educational practice and hopefully its relevance to contemporary art education.*

In addition to his teaching activities in the Academy, Pavel Chistyakov was also among a few Academy members who were truly passionate about the fate of art education in Russian public schools. I believe that this fact tells us about Chistyakov’s interest in art not only as a profession but also as an important part of human life. *Thus I’m planning to find out Chistyakov’s views on public art education and what he actually*

tried to accomplish in that field in order to figure out the impact of his activities on the development of the whole field of art education in Russia.

I also hope that this research would be able to help Western educators not only to find out some historical facts about Russian art education but also to better understand Russian educational views and practices. I strongly agree with Gough's ideas on internationalization and how important it is in our contemporary world that "scholars from different localities collaborate in reframing and decentering their own knowledge traditions and negotiate trust in each other's contributions to their collective work" (Gough cited in Pinar, 2008, p. 11). From my own experience, I realize how much my pedagogical understanding was enriched by my graduate program in art and visual culture education and by reading about the educational experiences of art educators from a number of different countries. I also think that researching international educational experiences and theories can not only enrich one's educational knowledge and add to the search for the best way to organize teaching and learning (Anderson-Levitt, 2008), but it also adds to one's understanding of other cultures in general.

Limitations of the Study

I see my very limited access to primary sources as the main limitation of this study. I'm not able to get and use any documents from Russian archives. On the other hand, I was fortunately able to find in American libraries some very interesting publications of Chistyakov's letters and notes and memoirs written by some of his students. In the Preface to one of these publications, the editors, N. Moleva and E. Belutin (1953), state that although a lot of written evidence was left by Pavel Chistyakov, most of it is presented by irregular undated notes and hundreds of letters. Moleva and Belutin claim that they only excluded some very personal details and that everything else is not modified in any way. The book *Letters, Notebooks and Memoirs* (1953) became my main primary source.

I also have to mention that most of my primary and secondary sources are written in Russian and I have translated all of the Russian references. Although I was trying to do my best in being as close to the source as possible, it has been rather difficult to preserve the spirit or the character of some remarks.

However, it is probably the first English translation of these documents.

METHODOLOGY

I don't intend my paper to be a biography of Pavel Chistyakov's life. There are a couple of fundamental and interesting biographical publications about Pavel Chistyakov that already exist. However, I will include a brief biography of Pavel Chistyakov in order to emphasize some of his personal achievements and important events in his life. I believe that this information is necessary for the purpose of understanding some of his ideas. I decided to start the Findings chapter with this information.

My major goal is not to retell the artist's biography, but to present my understanding of Chistyakov's teaching methods and ideas, and to see if they can be relevant and applicable, here and today. My minor objective is to introduce this prominent Russian art educator to the Western teaching community. Thus my intentions are rather practical and probably fit a pragmatic historical style (Erickson, 1985).

In order to avoid "isolationism" (Efland, 1995, p. 68) in my historic research, I intend to immerse my work into the historical and cultural context. I included most of the information about the socio-political situation in Russia during the suggested time period in my literature review. Some important facts about the field of art education at that time will also be reviewed there.

Keeping in mind my Soviet educational roots, it would have been much simpler for me to use dialectic materialism as a theoretical framework for my research. And although I'm definitely interested in figuring out the life's circumstances (or causes)

which led Chistyakov to make his mark on art education in Russia, that is not the main goal of my research.

I decided to use just dialectic theory with its method of analysis and synthesis, and I believe that the framework discussed by Karen Hamblen (1985) in her paper *Historical Research in Art Education: A process of Selection and Interpretation* is the best fit. Through selection and interpretation of facts from a number of written sources, I'm planning to create some new knowledge that can be meaningful and significant for the field of art education while promoting better cultural understanding.

The Choice of a Problem (Original Event)

My historical research was initiated by my personal interest in Pavel Chistyakov's methods after I discovered that most of the well-known Russian artists in the end of the nineteenth century were Chistyakov's students. This was rather intriguing since I wasn't very familiar with his work as an artist. My personal interest was intertwined with my professional curiosity as an art teacher. Thus the main question of my historical inquiry was formed: *What were the teaching methods and educational ideas of Pavel Chistyakov?*

I also believe that in addition to my personal and professional curiosity, the question of teaching methods is quite relevant to the whole field of art education. In his book *A History of Art Education. Intellectual and Social Currents in Teaching the Visual Arts* (1990), Arthur Efland repeatedly raises the question of researching the development of teaching methods in his book (Efland, 1990, p. 6; p. 263).

Sources

I classified my primary and secondary sources according to those advocated by Efland (1990) and Hamblen (1985). My research started with the search for published sources about Pavel Chistyakov. As I already noted in the “Limitations of the Study,” I couldn’t get access to any related archive documents in the US. I also was unable to do so in Russia, because of a rather long and complicated process of acquiring access to archives. Nevertheless, I was very lucky to find a book of Pavel Chistyakov’s letters and notes that was published just once in 1953. In addition, some letters to Chistyakov from his students and friends were also included.

This publication became my main primary source. Although this book is not as ideal a primary source as Chistyakov’s, or his friends, original writings, I chose to believe the editors of this book, Moleva and Beliutin. They state that only the orthography of Chistyakov’s notes was changed from the older Russian language to the contemporary one, and only a few most private details were excluded. However, the fact that they had to decide what material to publish indicates the initial level of manipulating the history (Hamblen, 1985, p. 4). I have to keep this in my mind when using this source.

I also used a couple of other primary sources. One of them is the published memoirs of one of Chistyakov’s most famous and favorite students – Ilya Repin. The book is called *Dalekoe I Blizkoe*. I have the book that was published in 1989, and it is the ninth edition of Repin’s thoughts about art and his stories about the artists that he closely knew. The other primary source is the book *Istoria Russkoj zivopisi v 19 veke*, an art

history work, written by Chistyakov's contemporary Alexander Benois, and first published in 1903.

In addition to these books, I managed to acquire a number of secondary sources. Two major manuscripts of Ginzburg and Moleva and Beliutin will be discussed in my literature review. Chistyakov is also mentioned in various publications about the Russian Art Academy and art education in general, and in some of the biographies of his famous students.

I have used internet resources minimally and only for finding the contemporary relevance of Chistyakov's teaching methods.

Selection and Analysis

The selection process of my research already started with the selection of my question and with the further selection of sources. Most of the available sources about Pavel Chistiakov were published in the Soviet Union and, as I mentioned in the literature review, all of the authors of these publications were naturally influenced by Soviet ideology and the theory of Marxism-Leninism. As Hamblen warns us, “history can be manipulated according to society’s needs” (Hamblen, 1985, p. 4). I definitely have to keep that in mind while reading material and selecting evidence for my research.

As stated earlier, I concentrated on the selection of evidence of Pavel Chistyakov’s *teaching* methods, his *teaching* personality and his *educational* ideas, although all of these features are closely tied with his social and political beliefs.

Overall, after finding my evidence, I have analyzed it for possible biases of authors and for relevance to my study. Then I was able to make my selection of what to include in this thesis. Thus, in this research, the processes of selection and analysis are highly intertwined.

I will present selected material in the “Findings” chapter. It will be structured in the following way:

1. Short biography of Pavel Chistyakov in order to emphasize some of his personal achievements and important events of his life.
2. Information about Pavel Chistyakov as an artist.
3. Information about Pavel Chistyakov as a teacher and his relationship with the Academy of Arts.

4. Personal writings of Chistyakov's students, which reflect Chistyakov's teaching methods and educational beliefs. This will include some facts about Chistyakov's relationship with his students.
5. Pavel Chistyakov's personal thoughts on art education in public schools.

Interpretation and Synthesis

In the *Findings* chapter I will act more as a reader of history and selector of evidence, but in this part I will act as an interpreter and creator of a written history (Hamblen, 1985, p. 6).

First of all, I will actually act as interpreter while translating material from Russian to English. As mentioned earlier, most of my evidence is written in Russian and I have to translate most of the quotes. The greatest difficulty is not only in translating from Russian, but in translating from an older version of the language. In addition, Pavel Chistyakov had this rather unique manner of speaking; frequently he created distinctive metaphors in order to generalize or to make his ideas more memorable to the students. All these facts make word to word translation impossible. Often I will have to significantly change the wording or the construction of the phrase in order to be able to deliver the main idea of the quote.

Secondly, in the *Discussion* chapter I intend to interpret my findings from my *personal* point of view as a contemporary art teacher who is trying to find a balance between teaching art for skills and for self-expression. Arthur Efland even calls this tension between concentrating on the content of the subject and focusing on self-expression the “drama of art education” (Efland, 1990, p. 263). I’m very interested in finding a possible answer to that question in Pavel Chistyakov’s teaching methods and pedagogical approaches. I also anticipate discovering some answers to that question in Chistyakov’s thoughts on the development and structuring of public art education.

Finally, I intend to analyze and discuss his views on art education in secondary schools in relation to the question of the purposes for teaching art in these schools.

“Like all educational research , education history is the study of educational processes at work, the meaning that we can make from understanding those processes, and improvement that we can recommend as a result of our enhanced understanding” (Rousmaniere, 2004, p. 50).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Questions *What to teach?* (*the content*) and *How to teach?* (*methods*) are the cornerstones of the educational process. *The SAGE Handbook of Curriculum and Instruction* (2008) is dedicated to these essential questions. However, only when you have searched through hundreds of references in a book, do you begin realizing what a huge amount of publications already exist on the topic. And although educators have been arguing about *What to teach?* and *How?* for centuries, only a few of them are still arguing *Why to teach* a particular subject. Art educators are almost constantly among these few, especially when the argument is about public schools' curriculum. No one is questioning the benefits of mathematics or sciences, but the arts are evidently viewed by officials, and probably by the general public as well, as something extra, and not essential for everyday life.

Each one of us as an art educator believes in the importance of teaching art. But for the success of the field it is very important to justify our ideas for society as a whole: the general public and the officials. A large number of contemporary articles presents us with various points of view on this problem. Some educators, like Smith-Shank and Soganci (2011), suggest interdisciplinary models of teaching art. Others, like Marshall (2005) or Savenkova (2010) argue in favor of deep integration of art into the school curriculum. Although Eisner (1991), Winner and Hetland (2008) and Lykova (2010) don't directly discuss curriculum integration, they produce a valid argument on how the arts "teach other modes of thinking we value": visual-spatial abilities, reflection, self-

criticism, and willingness to experiment and learn from mistakes (Winner and Hetland, 2008, p. 31).

But to understand how the views of the arts as “privileged” or “special” subjects arose, and to be able to support the argument towards benefits of art, we must know how the field of art education was formed according to the needs and beliefs of the society. “Only after we have studied the teaching of arts in earlier times can we understand its role in education today” (Efland, 1990, p. 1).

Arthur Efland, in his book, *A History Art Education. Intellectual and Social Currents in Teaching the Visual Arts* (1990), follows how changes in attitude toward the subject of art in schools depended on the socio-political and economic situation in Western countries. Although he discusses the classical Greek and Roman roots of teaching art, he pays particular attention to the end of the nineteenth century and the first part of the twentieth century, when the foundation for contemporary art education was built. For the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth (the time period of Pavel Chistyakov’s teaching activity) Efland concentrates on two major “concurrent and contrasting developments” (Efland, 1990, p. 7). They are industrial art education and romantic idealism within education. Both of these streams in art education were initiated by different socio-political and ideological impulses. Efland concludes that industrial art education “would not have been introduced without the support of a rich and powerful minority seeking to promote their own economic interests” (Efland, 1990, p. 114). Rapidly developing industries were in need of skilled engineers, topographers, and designers, and simply more qualified workers for the factories. Educational emphasis

was put on mechanical and technical drawing, and copying and memorizing prevailed over understanding in teaching methods.

Romantic idealism was rooted in Kantian philosophies and Froebel's kindergarten. As Efland notes, "Kantian notion of mind as active process was embodied in Froebel's kindergarten. "Self-activity" in turn led to "self-expression" as a method for teaching the arts by the turn of the century" (Efland, 1990, p. 115). Aesthetic and moral values were also highly involved into this stream. This movement provided a profound argument for the visual arts to be included in general education as additional sources for intellectual development and moral teaching (Efland, 1990, pp. 146-147).

In the book, *Art Making and Education* (1993), Diana Korzenik also connects the development of art education with social, economical and political processes in the American society; however, she does it in a less formal way. Korzenik makes her historical inquiry more personal and her narrative more expressive. She identifies four major traditions in teaching art and analyzes each tradition's foundation, rationale, and methods. In doing so, Korzenik emphasizes not only the social, economic, and political underlinings, but she also pays attention to the individual teaching experiences of particular art educators, like Arthur Dow, Charles Woodbury, and Mark Rothko, to name just a few. Korzenik chooses this style of historical inquiry because she views teaching as highly personalized, individual work carried out by many people with different backgrounds and biases (Brown & Korzenik, 1993, p. 200).

The most profound work about the history of Russian art education was published in 1982. The author of *History of Educational Methods in Art Education. Russian and*

Soviet school of Drawing is Rostovtcev N. N. I believe that his research combines both Efland's and Korzenik's qualities. Like Korzenik, he pays attention to individual pedagogical styles and the methods of many important Russian art educators, such as Venecianov, Briulov, Zarianko, Kramskoi, Perov, Chistyakov and others. But like Efland, the narrative is rather formal and the story is organized chronologically. Also similarly to Efland, Rostovtcev manages to link major changes in Russian art education with important events in Russian socio-political life and the economic development of the country.

Rostovtsev produced interesting historical research which is somewhat unique. Russian and Western historians usually pay attention only to the Russian Academy of Fine Arts (Lisovskii, 1982; Moleva & Beliutin, 1956,1963; Tatarinova, 2005) and overlook most of the other art educational activities. As a professor at the Moscow State Pedagogical University, Nikolai Rostovtcev gave a much more complete view of the history of Russian art education. Although Rostovtcev places the Academy in the center of his discussion, he also pays attention to the socio-political situation in the country and researches the foundation of art education outside the Academy.

Rostovtcev proposes that the roots of Russian art education are found in the Russian school of icon painting. He claims that it is essential to remember Simon Ushakov (1626-1686) who was among the most renowned Russian icon painters and teachers. His innovative method of painting involved a combination of the traditional religious style of icon painting with the realistic details of Western European art (Rostovtcev, 1982, chapter one, np).

While acknowledging these traditional roots, Rostovtcev emphasizes the huge Western influence on Russian art education, which began in the eighteenth century under the rule of Peter the Great and continued through the nineteenth century. The introduction of drawing as a general subject in Russian higher institutions began with its inclusion in the curriculum of the Russian Naval Academy in 1715. After that, drawing was incorporated into the curriculums of many other higher institutions, and in 1724 drawing was introduced as an elective subject in the Russian Academy of Sciences (Rostovtcev, 1982, chapter one, n.p.). It is obvious that drawing was valued only for practical purposes, similar to the later industrial movement in American art education.

The establishment of the Russian Academy of Arts in 1757 in Moscow (in 1758 it was transferred to Saint Petersburg) is viewed by Rostovtcev as a major step in the development of Russian art education (Rostovtcev, 1982, chapter two, n.p.).

The Academy has played a major role in Russian art education since then. Its influence grew in the nineteenth century, when the Academy gave birth to a new population of artists and art educators in Russia, who not only mastered Western art theory and practices, but also had a deep understanding of native Russian culture and heritage and were interested in developing new progressive teaching methods. Pavel Chistyakov was one of them.

During the time period of Pavel Chistyakov's artistic and educational activities, Russian society underwent some major economic and political changes. Industrial development of the country, the growing demand in factory workers, and the crisis in the agricultural system led to the elimination of serfdom in 1861. But instead of resolving

social problems, the elimination of serfdom simply aggravated them for various reasons (Eisenman, 2007, p. 307).

Changes in the politico - economic situation gave birth to new social classes in Russia: rich bourgeoisie, factory workers and a new type of educated professionals called *raznochinec*. *Raznochinec* was an educated professional, who was a commoner by birth but managed to get a college degree. They were active participants in Russian socio-political life and defenders of the interests of the working classes. A philosophical manuscript by one of them - Nikolay Chernyshevskiy - proclaimed a new progressive understanding of the role of art in the life of the society. Chernyshevskiy proposed that instead of being idealistic and detached from life, true art should reflect real life and emphasize the problems and ideas of its contemporaries. In addition, art should help in understanding things and events: it should become “a textbook of life” (Chernyshevskiy in Moleva & Beliutin, 1953, p. 10). Moreover, art should become an active social and political force and aim not only to reflect but also to change life for the better. These ideas became very popular among Russian educated youth of that time, and they changed the view of the role of an artist in the life of the whole society.

All these socio-political changes facilitated reforms in the Art Academy itself in 1859. Some reforms were meant “to encourage a greater independence of students” (Eisenman, 2007, p. 307) who could pursue any specialization and choose any Academy professor. In fact, Pavel Chistyakov became the first choice of many students when he became an adjunct professor in 1872 (Tatarinova, 2005, p. 485).

Some of these reforms sounded great on paper, but in fact enhanced the tension between Academy officials and progressive Russian artists and philosophers (Rostovtcev, 1982, chapter three, np). New acceptance rules made it more difficult for commoners to get accepted to, and study at the Academy. In addition, the study of classical examples, instead of being the method of learning the most effective ways of representing nature through artistic images, became the ultimate goal. Formally, studying classical heritage was meant to develop and improve fundamental artistic skills, but in the current conditions in the Academy it led to idealistic art separated from reality (Moleva & Beliutin, 1953, p.38).

It resulted in the revolt of fourteen young artists led by Ivan Kramskoi in 1863. They voluntarily left the Academy, and in a few years, formed a very influential artistic group called the Wanderers (*Peredvizhniki*). Their main goal was to depart from the mythological and historical subject matters of the Academy and to create art that represented and commented on real life; art that could be “an agent of social reform” (Doesschate Chu, 2006, p. 458). Also by moving their exhibitions from town to town, they tried to make art more accessible to different audiences.

The leader of the Wanderers, Ivan Kramskoi, wrote that he believed that an artist should not only possess great professional skills, but also be among the most educated and progressive people of his time: he should be aware of the most important ideas and beliefs which are relevant to his contemporaries and he should clearly determine his ideological sympathies and antipathies (Kramskoi in Moleva, 1953, p. 14-15).

This rebellion had a great effect on the Academy itself and facilitated some future structural and conceptual changes in the Academy (Rostovtcev, 1982, chapter three, np). In 1893, by the reform of Aleksandr the Third, the Academy was divided into the Council (the official structure) and the School of Arts (the educational structure). Moreover, the most prominent members of the Wanderers were eventually awarded titles of Academicians and taught at the Academy. Some of them were close friends and students of Pavel Chistyakov, who was in Italy when the “revolt of the fourteen” happened.

Many ideas of the Wanderers, such as truthfulness and the social relevance of art and ideas of social justice, were deeply shared by Chistyakov (Moleva, 1956). In addition, Pavel Chistyakov and Ivan Kramskoi, who were close during their studies at the Academy, also shared some ideas about methods of teaching art (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 70; p. 528).

But in spite of all the changes, the general teaching principles and methods of the Academy needed to be deeply transformed according to the progressive ideas of the changing Russian society. Pavel Chistyakov played a huge role in this transformation as a passionate artist, a devoted citizen, and a teacher of the generation of artists of democratic realism (Moleva & Beliutin, 1953, p. 40).

In the book about Pavel Chistyakov, *P. P. Chistyakov theoretic i Pedagog*³ (1953), Moleva and Beliutin put a lot of effort into proving the materialistic views of Pavel Chistyakov in order to connect his artistic beliefs with Marxism-Leninism and

³ The Russian title is spelled with Latin characters, in English it means: P.P. Chistyakov - theorist and educator.

dialectic materialism. That effort is understandable as their work was written in the midst of the Socialist epoch.

They call Chistyakov a “spontaneous materialist” (Moleva & Beliutin, 1953, p. 60) and I think that there is a certain element of truth to that, as Chistyakov definitely persistently demanded from his students detailed research of nature. As he stated: “In art of painting you should first research the nature and only after that learn how to depict it” (Chistyakov in Moleva & Beliutin, 1953, p. 65). Chistyakov viewed life and nature as a source of inspiration and knowledge for the creation of true art. It seemed rather natural for him - a dedicated follower of realism. As a realist artist, he believed that only art that truly reflects real life can be a source of knowledge and an agent of future change. However, he also demanded not just a primitive naturalistic depiction of real life, but a creative reinterpretation of real life according to an artist’s personal ideas and beliefs (Moleva & Beliutin, 1953, p. 62).

Another fundamental work about Pavel Chistyakov, *P. P. Chistyakov I ego pedagogicheskaya sistema*,⁴ was written by Izabella Ginzburg in 1940. Unlike Moleva and Beliutin, who concentrated their attention on Chistyakov’s teaching philosophies, Ginzburg produced a more traditional biographical work. Although she also focused on Chistyakov’s teaching activities, she presents us with additional information on the artistic career of Pavel Chistyakov, his troubles with the Academy, his social life, and his family as well. I think that this book helped me to better understand Pavel Chistyakov’s personality and the formation of his views on art and teaching.

⁴ The Russian title is spelled with Latin characters, in English it means: P. P. Chistyakov and his pedagogical system.

Furthermore, in the preface to the book, Ginzburg, very much like Efland, emphasizes the importance of historical context. “Rooted in general principles of Russian realistic art of 1860-1870, Chistyakov’s pedagogical system can be understood without major distortions only in its historical context” (Ginzburg, 1940, p. 3). From known facts it is evident that Chistyakov was a devoted follower of realism at a time when the Russian Art Academy turned to ancient mythology and artificiality (Ginzburg, 1940, p. 3; p 13).

It is very important to keep in mind Chistyakov’s realistic orientation during our further investigation of his teaching methods and educational ideas.

However, before moving to my findings on Chistyakov’s educational activities, I would like to include a very brief version of his biography. I also decided that it is rather important to include information about his artistic practices and general views on art and artistic accomplishments as well. I believe that this information can lead to a better understanding of Pavel Petrovich Chistyakov’s educational philosophies.

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF PAVEL CHISTYAKOV

Pavel Chistyakov was born in 1832 in a small village, Prudy, to the family of a serf. However, his father's owner freed the boy a few days after his birth.

In 1849-1861 he was a student of Russian Academy of Fine Arts in St. Petersburg. During these years Chistyakov was constantly giving private art lessons and teaching at the art school of the venerable Society for the Support of Artists (Chistyakov, 1953, 513).

In 1861 for his historical painting *Sofia Vtorovna at the Wedding of Vasilij the Dark*, Chistyakov was awarded a golden medal and got a scholarship from the Academy. This money allowed him to travel to France and Italy.

Between 1862-1870 Chistyakov traveled in Europe and mostly lived and worked in Italy, where he painted a few of his most prized portraits: *Dzovanna* (1864), *Stonecutter* (1870), *Roman Beggar* (1870).

In 1870 Chistyakov returned to St. Petersburg and was awarded the title of Academic for his painting *Roman Beggar* (Chistyakov, 1953, 144).

In 1880 Chistyakov painted *Portrait of Artist's Mother*. In 1904 S. Diaghilev asked Chistyakov if he could include this painting in a big exhibition of portraits in Tavricheskii Palace. He called this painting "one of the best Russian portraits" (Ginzburg, 1940, p. 75).⁵

From 1872 to 1910 Chistyakov taught at Russian Academy of Fine Arts:

1872 - 1890 Chistyakov was adjunct Professor. He was taught painting

⁵ I found this fact as rather significant, because S. Diaghilev was one of the main figures in the *World of Arts* movement, which actively criticized Academy and realist artists as well.

and drawing.

1892 Chistyakov was finally given the title of Professor.

1890 - 1912 Chistyakov was a head of the Mosaic department.

During these years the department truly flourished. Chistykov put all his knowledge and effort into developing new methods of the mosaic process and technique. Instead of servicing just one cathedral in St. Petersburg, the department began getting orders from all around the country (Ginzburg, 1940, pp. 89-91).

1908 - 1910 Chistyakov was head of the historical painting department.

He was finally given a chance to have his own studio in the Academy where he could teach. He was given this chance only because of the huge influence of his former student I. Repin (Ginzburg, 1940, p. 97).

Pavel Chistyakov died in 1919.



Figure 7: Chistyakov, Boyarin, 1876

FINDINGS

In this chapter I will present information that can characterize Pavel Chistyakov's teaching methods and pedagogical beliefs. This will include his personal advice and ideas, his students' thoughts and reflections, and some information from secondary sources. In addition, I will include Chistyakov's thoughts on the development of art education in primary and secondary schools in Russia. However, I decided to begin this chapter with information about his artistic practices, ideas and career, as it is rather vital for a better understanding of Chistyakov's educational philosophies.

*Art touches and elevates the soul, but
true art does it quietly and unobtrusively
(P. Chistyakov, 1881)*

Pavel Chistyakov - an Artist

It is impossible to separate Chistyakov - artist and Chistyakov - art teacher. It is natural that Chistyakov's artistic views strongly influenced his teaching practices. Chistyakov himself considered that only a practicing artist could be a good art teacher. He believed that an art teacher himself "must produce his own artwork in order to be able to support his statements with an example of his own work" (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 103). Therefore, I find it rather important to briefly examine his views on art and artistic practice.

According to Chistyakov's own notes, he started drawing using perspective when he was 12. He describes how he figured out the basics of perspective while drawing a village church from the corner point of view (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 513). Even at this young age he already was very attentive to nature and was trying to figure out some simple principles of drawing from nature. Much later, in 1854, he writes to his brother: "Draw from nature, but *do not just copy, look carefully, try to understand...*" (Chistykov, 1953, p. 21). This could be considered as one of Chistyakov's main artistic beliefs: "realism is not only a simple depiction of what we see, but it is also a reflection of our understanding of things and events" (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 304). Alexander Benois called it, "a passion for truth and attentive and thoughtful view on life" (Benois, 1998, p.144).

From the beginning of his artistic career, Chistyakov realized an unbreakable connection between art and social life. Chistyakov used to say that social life and social ideas are imperative to painting (Chistyakov, 1953, pp. 304, 397). He didn't believe in "pure art for art's sake", but thought that true art should be a combination of high professional skills coupled with an ideological platform and social relevance (Moleva, 1962, p. 282). However, I believe that Soviet researchers of Chistyakov's legacy overestimated a radical revolutionary component in his artistic theory. I think that in Chistyakov's case, as well as in many other Russian artists' cases, ideas were formed not only according to the crude formulas of revolutionary activists, but also according to "liberals' more moderate program of morally motivated service to and communication with the public" (Valkenier, 1990, p. 22).

The last work painted by Chistyakov as a student of the Academy, was *Sofia Vtorovna at the Wedding of Vasilij the Dark* (1861). This is a historical painting, but it was made in a realistic rather than academic manner. You can sense a deep psychological conflict between the main characters. The figures are emotional and alive and the composition is very dynamic. Chistyakov chose a seemingly insignificant plot, but if one knows Russian history well, it becomes clear that this minor event became a starting point to a long chain of bloody conflicts between a few political groups. This plot, although it was well suited to the demands of the Academy board, was also relevant to the complicated social and political situation in the country. The theme from Russian history was also rather unusual for the time, when mythological and biblical subjects were the most popular among Russian artists (Ginzburg, 1940, p. 25).

One of Chistyakov's students, Victor Vasnetsov, wrote to him in 1900 saying, "we should remember that Russian real historic painting started with your work *Sofia Vitovna*" (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 270). Moleva (1962) suggests that it was Chistyakov, who first applied realistic principles to historical painting in Russia. He believed that historic painting should tell a meaningful story which is related to current social problems. Through creating realistically individual, but also typically historical characters, the artist should be able to create not only a specific dramatic situation, but also at the same time a more general concept of the suggested historical period. Unfortunately, for various reasons, Chistyakov was never able to fully develop this new understanding of historic style in his art, but it became the starting point for some of his students, like Surikov and Vasnetsov. They truly flourished in painting historical artworks that were not only skillfully made, but also raised very meaningful social questions particularly relevant to their contemporaries.

The success of *Sofia Vtorovna at the Wedding of Vasilij the Dark* gave Chistyakov an opportunity to travel and study abroad as an Academy scholar. This trip played a huge role in the development of Chistyakov's artistic views. He was fascinated by Italian landscapes and the art of Renaissance. And, at the same time, he writes a lot about the life of poor people in Italy. He was shocked, for example, by the view of an artist begging for money on a street or the striking poverty and infinite tiredness of simple workers (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 34, p. 41). He reflects his impressions in the portraits called *Roman beggar* (1870) and *Stonecutter* (1870). In these artworks, Chistyakov managed to express important social issues through skillfully painted

portraits of individual people. Later V. Polenov wrote, “An amazing drawing and strength of painting in *Stonecutter* astonished us. The artwork became for us an ideal of these artistic qualities” (Polenov in Ginzburg, 1940, p. 47).

After reading Chistyakov’s letters, I think that these paintings also convey Chistyakov’s personal feelings: “somebody’s grief is my grief, everything troubles me...” (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 41). I also think that he was associating himself with these men to some degree, as he was working really hard, but was earning little money for his work and sometimes the poor conditions of his life bothered him (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 41, p. 50). Of course, painting and drawing was Chistyakov’s profession; thus his source of making a living. But according to some of his other letters, Chistyakov considered that it was immoral to produce art just for making a profit (p. 82, p. 92, p. 100). In 1864 he wrote from Italy to his brother Peter saying, “Love art just for being art and as a way of knowing, art should be sacred and not simply a way of earning money and getting rich” (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 34) and “only labor and art are strong enough to save us from emptiness” (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 41).

The dilemma for Chistyakov, and some of his students, was in conveying important ideas through art and, at the same time, making it relevant to the general public. Chistyakov thought that if the artwork just intends to surprise the viewers, it won’t last long. Visual effects can be amusing but they become boring fast. People need to feel and think. And indeed, true art makes people feel and think; it is comforting and rising the soul but does it quietly and gradually (Chistyakov, 1953, p.114). “Only intrigue

is emerging loudly and maybe making the art market more alive. But true art is growing and strengthening in studios quietly and thoughtfully” (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 239).

Chistyakov himself admitted that he was a much better speaker than writer (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 253). According to his correspondence with N. Filosofov, the piece written by Lev Tolstoy on the meaning and purpose of art summarizes some ideas of Chistyakov and his best students (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 243).

Tolstoy considered several conditions to be met in order for an artwork to become a true work of art:

1. An artist must feel and understand problems which are important for the mankind. To be able to do so an artist should be educated, have high moral values and participate in social life. This artist will be able to raise universally significant ideas in his artwork.
2. In order to be able to convey his ideas, an artist must obtain the highest level of artistic skill. Drawing and painting should become as natural for him as walking. He also must be self-critical and reflective about his work.
3. An artist must speak from his soul, he should love his subject. It is very important that an artist expresses ideas that are not only significant to society, but also important to him as well (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 243).

In these notes for one of his lectures Lev Tolstoy, a philosopher and writer, primarily talks about ideas. Pavel Chistyakov, an artist, connects ideas and artistic practice. He wrote to his former student Vasiliy Surikov in 1891, "I painted, studied a lot, learned from nature, tried to answer many questions and I realized - the idea dictates the

plot, the plot dictates the execution (the technique)... Look at Titian's *Venus*. It is not intense in colors or complicated, but clean and simple. It would be perfect to reach this... But of course, besides having a talent, one should constantly work as much as Titian did" (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 253).

Therefore, Chistyakov believed that proper execution is as important as the idea of an artwork. He often used to tell his students not to start a painting before developing a meaningful plot and thoughtfully deciding on artistic approach (Meyer cited in Chistyakov, 1953, p. 43). Moreover, in order to become meaningful to the viewers, the ideas of an artwork have to be important to the artist himself. As Chistyakov wrote early in his career, "I can't work according to someone else's taste" (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 17). Objective things and events have to be conveyed through the artist's own thoughts and beliefs – through his personality. In one of the letters to his father in 1866, Chistyakov wrote, "An artist should paint only something that touches him deeply, that is interesting to him and suits his character" (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 45). Ginzbug attributes Chistyakov's failure in finishing his big historic painting, *Last minutes of Messalina*, started in 1865, to the wrong choice of the subject. She argues that Chistyakov chose this subject not because it was very interesting to him, but because it was an appropriate theme for academic circles (Ginzburg, 1940, p. 40-41).

In a book about the history of Russian art, Alexander Benois called Pavel Chistyakov "one of the best Russian painters and the only Russian artist who truly valued drawing and managed to uncover its mysteries" (Benois, 1998, p. 143). At the same time, Benois claims that Chistyakov accomplished very little as an artist. And indeed,

Chistyakov left us a relatively small number of finished paintings, though each one of these pictures was very well accepted by his contemporaries and became a part of museum collections. For example, in 1877, V. Polenov wrote to P. Tretyakov, "I would like to congratulate you with the purchase of Chistyakov's *Boyarin*. Your collection includes now this wonderful artwork. Paintings like this one don't often appear in our art..." (Polenov in Chistyakov, 1953, p. 81).

There were a couple of objective reasons for Chistyakov's relatively low artistic productivity. The first one is his illness. During the last year of his trip to Italy, Chistyakov got very sick and wrote to his friend that he had a cold, after which he began suffering from terrible headaches (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 53, p. 57). These headaches kept terrorizing him all his life. He often wrote to some of his friends that his illness was preventing him from painting (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 62, p. 100, p. 112, p. 163 and many others).

The second reason was his teaching. Chistyakov often admitted that he loved teaching and felt the desire to teach and convey his knowledge about art. At one point he considered that teaching could become his primary source of income, but it was leaving him less and less time to create something significant in art (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 84). When he was painting a portrait of his mother in 1880 he wrote to Tretyakov, "I have such a strong desire to paint and possess the needed knowledge, but I can't: simply don't have time! Say, I teach well and serve my country, but I still would like to make something fundamental in painting..." (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 109). And finally, in 1883, he wrote to V. Savinskyi, "I decided to keep just my evening classes. It is time to work

on my own art; I was waiting too long...” (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 132). However, at the same time Chistyakov admitted that “while he was teaching others he was also learning himself” (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 513).

Overall, Chistakov’s views on art deeply influenced his teaching practices. He considered that one of the cornerstones of an artist’s education should be an understanding of art’s role in the life of society. Therefore, the development of an interest in social life and current events, discussions on the role of art in our life, and an understanding of current interests of the public and worldwide problems should become the main source for the shaping of a young artist’s artistic philosophies.

But at the same time, an artist should acquire enough knowledge and technical skills in order to be able to express his or her ideas. And this becomes the second part of artistic education according to Chistyakov: constant development of professional artistic skills and learning the laws of drawing and painting, learning from nature (Moleva & Beliutin, 1953, p. 64).

I know from experience that not every great artist can be a great teacher. To teach and to teach well, one should acquire a lot of artistic and teaching experience in addition to a talent and desire to teach. (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 264)

Pavel Chistyakov – an Art Teacher

Inevitably Pavel Chistyakov's general views on art deeply influenced his pedagogical practice. Chistyakov used to say about art, "Every noble and high idea demands a noble and extremely professional execution, one is unthinkable without the other" (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 319). He believed that the highest levels of artistic professionalism can only be reached through graduate, systematic, and thoughtful studies. In order to be able to find significant ideas for paintings, an artist has to get a good general education. Chistyakov often told his students that, "an artist should be very well educated in various aspects; constantly read and study, only then your horizons will be wide and your pictures will be deep and meaningful" (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 482). Technical skills, according to Chistyakov, are the language of an artist. "Develop your technique constantly; without it you can never artistically express your dreams, feelings and the beauty of the world" (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 482).

Chistyakov considered that along with an excellent general education, the exchange of thoughts and ideas between students and teachers is an important and effective way of helping future artists to form their views on art and the world in general (Chistyakov, 1953, pp. 429, 433). Chistyakov himself was always ready to answer students' questions or to participate in a discussion not only about art, but also about

various social, philosophical or scientific topics. As Chistyakov's son remembered, although art and teaching were always his father's priorities, Pavel Petrovich also led a very active social life and had many other interests, such as music, science, literature, religion etc. (Moleva & Beliutin, 1953, p. 96).

One of his students remembered that, "during the break students didn't rush out of the classroom as they usually did with many other professors, but began asking Pavel Petrovich various questions, and shared their dreams and concerns. Nowhere and from no one were students able to get such thoughtful answers to their questions. He always talked very passionately and captivatingly about art. It seemed that he never got tired; he always was ready to share his knowledge and deep love of art with us" (Shilcova in Moleva & Beliutin, 1953, p. 95).⁶

Chistyakov was definitely a talented speaker, who was very articulate and passionate in expressing his thoughts. This quality made his observations quite memorable and his teaching more effective (Tatarinova, 2005, p. 486). But despite his good and trustable relationship with the students, Chistyakov considered that the full leadership of a teacher is very important. According to him, this leadership should be based not on the formal authority of a teacher, but on his deep knowledge and experience (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 429). However, at the same time, he respected students' views and was extremely considerate of their opinions and feelings. Perhaps because of this, many of his students kept in touch with him long after their graduation.

⁶ Further I'm planning to present additional students' reflections in order to create a more complete image of Chistyakov as a teacher.

Pavel Chistyakov began giving private art lessons as a student of the Academy in order to earn his living. At the end of his studies at the Academy, he began teaching at the art school of the Venerable Society for the Support of Artists. After returning from Italy in 1870, he was invited to teach at the Academy and continued teaching there for almost 40 years, until 1910. Chistyakov highly valued the Academy as an important part of Russian art and art education and never denied it as an institution (Moleva & Beliutin, 1953, p. 71). But he thought that the current educational philosophies and methods of the Academy, among which were constant copying, thoughtless mechanical exercises and absolute lack of connection with real life, became outdated and negatively affected the development of Russian artistic school (Rostovtcev, 1982, np). In 1882 Chistyakov wrote, "The Academy never ever stood lower than today" (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 116). Ylia Repin shared Chistyakov's negative view on the current practices at the Academy: "The Academy praises this outdated routine in art,.. for such artworks a young student should be kicked out, not encouraged" (Repin in Chistyakov, 1953, p. 122).

After years and years of pedagogical practice, Chistyakov developed many suggestions on the structure of Russian art education and on the curriculum. I now present you with a brief synopsis of his ideas on that subject. I prepared it based on published work by Chistyakov himself (1953), Ginzburg (1940), Moleva & Beliutin (1953, 1956) and Rostovtcev (1982).

Pavel Chistyakov was absolutely convinced that visual art should be included as a required subject into the secondary school program. He viewed art as a very important tool for children's development since it can help them learn about the world and because

it can benefit children's development (Chistyakov in Moleva & Beliutin, 1953, p. 79).

Chistyakov considered that it is essential to put nature at the center of secondary schools' art programs. Art teachers should explain to pupils how to observe nature, how to understand it, and how to depict it realistically. Children should be able to realize the connection between nature and art.

If young people wanted to continue their artistic education, their next step would be to enter the Academy of Fine Arts or another professional art institution. It is essential to teach students how to look at nature as artists and the first year was dedicated to learning the principles of transferring of three-dimensional images to the flat surface (paper or canvas). Students learned the basic techniques of drawing and painting of three-dimensional objects. At that point, an important role was given to the laws of perspective and anatomy and the theory of colors. Students drew from still-life and classic casts.

After the year of studies, students switched to drawing and painting live models. They painted mostly head portraits and made brief sketches. Students practiced the application of their theoretical knowledge of perspective and anatomy, while drawing or painting a real person.

The third and fourth years were devoted to painting and drawing a full figure from the live model. The emphasis was still put on drawing and painting and on the connection of theoretical knowledge to artistic practice. A lot of attention was also paid to composition. At this step, Chistyakov proposed the following structure for the school year: first month – individual work from nature; second month – a setting suggested by a teacher; third month – individual work; fourth month – suggested setting for the grade,

after which the sequence would start all over again. This alternation of free and suggested assignments, which was not common to Academy practices, was meant to allow students to solve problems predetermined by their teacher and under his guidance, and later thoughtfully apply the acquired knowledge and experience to their own individual work. Individual work at the beginning of the sequence allowed a teacher to figure out the strengths and weaknesses of each student.

During the fifth and sixth years, along with the advanced foundations classes, students studied in individual professors' studios. As we already know, after reforms in the Academy, students were allowed to choose a professor. Chistyakov himself encouraged students to switch to a few different professors' studios in order to try out various styles and approaches. Chistyakov valued studio practice extremely since it was more individually centered; this practice allowed the teacher to pay more attention to his students and students also had a chance to execute their own different ideas instead of all of them drawing from the same sitter as practiced in foundations classes.

While the Academy enforced stiff and uniform artistic language upon students, Chistyakov considered that a good art education should not suppress individual styles and talents. Ilya Repin characterized Chistyakov as a teacher who had "respect for classicism in painting but not for dry academism and encouraged his pupils' individual inclinations" (Valkenier, 1990, p. 113).

Chistyakov also believed that, although having artistic talent was a great advantage, to be talented was not nearly enough to become a great artist. He believed that a talent should be accompanied by hard work, technical skills and knowledge. He wrote

in 1877 about one artist, G. Semiradskiy, that “it is obvious that he has a great talent and imagination,...he would be able to paint great pictures if he carefully studied technical skills and learned the laws of fine art” (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 84).

Pavel Petrovich also wrote that “each talent has its own unique language” and “a good art educator should teach the general laws of art and techniques, but absolutely should not force his artistic style upon the student” (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 424). The goal of Chistyakov’s curriculum laid in the development of individual talents of each young artist while providing every student with deep professional knowledge and skills. “Each student should learn artistic laws and how to apply them to his own work, after that let him fly as he pleased. The purpose of a good school is in helping students with reaching their individual goals” (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 425). He also used to say that “the bigger the talent - the more careful you have to be teaching him” (Chistykov, 1953, p. 427). One of his students, V. Baruzdina⁷, wrote that, “Pavel Petrovich was able to see individual talents and unique abilities of each student and he taught us according to these abilities, that is why his students’ art works are so different and don’t resemble his own style. We were solving same problems, using same laws, but different approaches” (Baruzdina in Chistyakov, 1953, p. 426).

At the same time, Chistyakov expected a lot of hard work and desire to learn from his students. “The most important quality for a student is his attentiveness, truthfulness,

⁷ Varvara Baruzdina was Chistyakov’s niece and one of his many female students. In one of his autobiographies Chistyakov emphasized that he had many students, both male and female, and some of them already had awards from the Academy (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 521). Chistyakov had female students among his private students, both at the Art School of the venerable Society for the Support of Artists, and later at the Academy (Moleva, 1962, p. 270).

an ability to see not just to look, thus deep understanding of nature” (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 21).

Chistyakov viewed the art curriculum as systematic and successive. Theory should be tightly connected with practice and a new assignment should be given only after the previous one was fully completed and understood (Moleva & Beliutin, 1953, p. 99). He built his curriculum not on simply making setups more complex, but on setting more difficult artistic and creative goals for his students. Chistyakov wrote in his notes that, “everything is well-known for a technical drawer, but everything is new for a true artist” (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 304).⁸ According to Chistyakov, every new assignment is an important and meaningful step which has to be independently and creatively overcome by each student. As for the teacher, he or she has to carefully consider the benefits and structure of each assignment, lucidly explain the task and guide the student to its completion.

For example, during one class, students were required to draw a head concentrating only on general form and perspective. In a different assignment the goal was to go from the general form to a detailed finished drawing without losing connection between the parts of the head. Chistyakov also often practiced switching from one genre to another: from still-life to portrait or landscape; from detailed drawing to quick sketches. He used to say: “You can push a cart filled with soil routinely and quietly; you

⁸ This phrase has much more wit and wisdom in its original Russian version, I feel that I didn’t successfully make this translation, but I still decided to include this citation. I consider it important for understanding of Chistyakov’s educational philosophies.

cannot teach art like that. An artist has to be passionate, energetic, curious, and full of life” (Chistyakov in Moleva & Beliutin, 1953, p. 101).

In contrast to many other teachers at the Academy, who promoted the mechanical transfer of knowledge by strict instructions, corrections of students’ artworks and primitive copying, Chistyakov was always a true supporter of inquiry-based learning. Chistyakov himself admitted that from the early years he, “loved figuring out everything on his own”. For example, according to Chistyakov, he acquired most of his knowledge of perspective not in classes, but during everyday six mile walks from the Academy to his flat (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 513).

In 1885 Chistyakov wrote to M. Botkin, “A good teacher does not primitively correct or even shame a student, but gives careful clues, which shall lead a student to an understanding of his mistakes and finding a right solution” (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 188, p. 429). He also used to suggest individual assignments to his students according to the nature of their mistakes. For example, Chistyakov often asked students, who couldn’t correctly determine proportions of a figure, to draw multiple sketches from groups of objects similar in shape but different in size (Moleva & Beliutin, 1953, p. 153).

The following situation, described by one of his students, A. Mendeleva, can serve as a great example of his pedagogical approach. She remembers one of Chistyakov’s classes where students were drawing a full figure from a cast: “I was completely consumed by my drawing when I heard a quiet coughing behind me. Because I was inexperienced I quite distorted the proportions of the figure. Pavel Petrovich was looking at my drawing and said, “When drawing an eye look at the ear.” This phrase

struck me as very strange, but later I understood the meaning: even a perfectly executed part makes no sense if it is not in harmony with the whole. I believe that no other detailed explanation could make such an impression on me as this short, unexpected and precise remark, which I've always remembered" (Mendeleeva in Ginzburg, 1940, p. 102).

As we already know, Chistyakov was very passionate about the connection between art and nature. He considered that truthful reflection of nature by an artist is not possible only from subjective observation. Chistyakov considered that scientific knowledge plays a huge role in creating a great artwork. "Serious art is impossible without science" (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 320). "High true art belongs to artists who are not only talented but also well educated" (Chistyakov in Moleva & Beliutin, 1953, p. 103). It becomes clear from the context that by "well educated" Chistyakov meant not only artists that learned liberal arts and artistic skills, but also thoughtfully studied anatomy and perspective. As Chistyakov liked to say, "true art is built on two necessary sciences – Anatomy and Perspective"⁹ (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 322).

Students at the Academy always study anatomy and perspective. The problem was in a certain neglect of these important subjects in the Russian Academy at the time. Moreover, Chistyakov observed that even after learning anatomy and perspective, students were not able to apply their knowledge to artwork (Chistyakov, 1953, pp. 321-322). Pavel Petrovich helped his students to connect anatomy knowledge and laws of perspective with real nature; he helped them to understand the anatomical structure of a real sitter's body and how the image changed according to the student's point of view.

⁹ Capital letters were used by Chistyakov in his notes.

Most importantly, Chistyakov taught his students how to apply their knowledge to drawing or painting practices.

Chistyakov suggested that, along with listening to lectures and studying books on anatomy, students should be able to connect their theoretical knowledge to visual images of muscles, joints, bones etc. in the anatomy theater. After that students could move to drawing *ekorshe* and only after that to drawing a real sitter. For young artists it was also important to have a habit of constantly checking figure drawings by anatomy textbooks. According to Chistyakov, the whole point of studying anatomy should be in being able to apply it to art (Moleva & Beliutin, 1953, p. 105).

Pavel Chistyakov paid even more attention to learning perspective. “Everything that exists in nature has its own form and falls under the laws of perspective” (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 324).

Along with providing students with knowledge on the theory of perspective, Chistyakov believed that it is very important to teach students “how to look”, “how to see correctly” (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 333). By “seeing correctly” he meant seeing not simply flat contours, but three-dimensional volumes and depth. He advised students not to look directly at the object all the time, but look at something else and then “glance suddenly” at the object; this method helps to see the figure as a whole and in depth (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 333). His advice to “look at the ear when drawing an eye”, or “see the whole while drawing details”, or “look aside the object” serve the same purpose – to see the body or an object as a whole (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 333).

Various exercises, which involved visual memory, were also often used by Chistyakov. Among them were quick sketches of whatever students observed on their way to the class or a sketch of a model's movement, when students were asked to observe a fast movement by the sitter and then draw it from memory (Moleva & Beliutin, 1953, p. 153). The goal was not only to train students' visual memory, but also in developing the ability to see, not just look.

Chistyakov suggested that his students constantly "*proveryali*" (Russian for *to check*) their drawings by comparing different parts to horizontal and vertical dimensions and according to the distance between an object and an artist. He thought that an artist "should train his eye to compare volumes and measure distances without the help of various instruments" (Chistyakov in Moleva & Beliutin, 1953, p. 112).

In teaching perspective Chistyakov also paid attention to the picture plane and how it is placed. He believed that the best positioning of the canvas is strictly in front of an artist (ninety degree to the line of sight) and at the distance of at least one hand; this positioning can help an artist to avoid perspective mistakes (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 328).

An artist can apply his knowledge to artistic practice only when he has acquired adequate artistic skills and one of Chistyakov's teaching goals was to help his students to learn these artistic skills.

When Chistyakov talks about artistic skill or technique, he describes it in a rather broad way, "Technique is what we call simplicity and height in art, based on comprehensive learning of various artistic laws and the ability to apply this knowledge to practice" (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 340). Pavel Petrovich once told one of his students that

“an artist talks through his artworks” (Seleznev in Chistyakov, 1953, p. 337). Therefore, possession of artistic skills allows an artist to convey his ideas to the viewer.

As was mentioned earlier, Chistyakov argued for the adequacy between the subject of an artwork and the skillfulness and manner of artistic execution:” The highest ideas demand the highest level of execution” (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 319).

Chistyakov, as a realist artist, considered drawing, painting and composition as the main artistic methods, which enable an artist to truthfully reflect nature in an artwork. These methods are based on objective laws of nature and are not invented according to someone’s taste. As an academician, he considered drawing as the most fundamental to art. He compares drawing to manhood and painting to womanhood (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 334). It is somewhat similar to the discussion that developed around Impressionism in France in the end of the nineteenth century, when drawing was associated with classical art and considered more rational, logical and manly, while painting, associated with impressionism, was viewed as a reflection of one’s feelings and as womanly. But Chistyakov never juxtaposed drawing to painting; he viewed them both as important parts of art, which only together make a whole. Interestingly, in the Russian language the word *risunok* (drawing) is masculine while the word *zhivopis’* (painting) is feminine.

Chistyakov considered drawing a “conscious building of an object’s structure; recreation of material essence of an object”, for him to draw meant to “think and comprehend” (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 334). He thought that painting should support the drawing and “each color stroke should serve building a structure” (Chistyakov in Moleva & Beliutin, 1953, p. 113).

Not surprisingly, in his teaching, Chistyakov paid a lot of attention to drawing. “Architecture, sculpture, landscape, etching, painting – all these arts are based on strict learning of drawing...Drawing, as known, is a foundation of art” and only by improving teaching of drawing the level of art education in general can be raised (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 342). That is precisely why I decided to concentrate mainly on Chistyakov’s methodology on teaching drawing.

Chistyakov, as a true realist, believed that an artist has to draw an object not only as he sees it, but also as this object exists in reality (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 343). Only by researching nature can an artist understand the structure of real objects (forms) and how they exist in real world. After understanding the structure of the object and its environment, an artist will be able to perceive not only the visible, but also the invisible parts of this object, and consciously draw a truthful representation of the three-dimensional object on a flat surface. As V. Vasnetcov remembered, Chistyakov used to say that, “if the artist is drawing a profile view of the head he should draw it in such a way that the viewer would be convinced that invisible parts of this head also exist” (Vasnetcov in Chistyakov, 1953, p. 341).

Therefore, the realistic goal of truthful representation of real three-dimensional volumes on a flat surface determined Chistyakov’s methodology in teaching drawing and painting. Certainly, Chistyakov didn’t develop this methodology from nothing. He admired and researched the work of the old masters of the Renaissance. He often mentioned Titian and Veronese in his correspondence. In their historical and religious paintings, Chistyakov saw excellently executed portraits of real people. Probably because

of his own interest in nature and science, Pavel Petrovich mostly valued the work of Leonardo da Vinci. For Chistyakov he was “an ideal example of the educated artist” (Ginzburg, 1940, p. 116).

Constant analysis of old masters’ artworks and his own artistic experience allowed Chistyakov to develop a graduate and detailed program for teaching students how to create truthful images of real things on a flat piece of paper.

Chistyakov’s suggestion to “look at the whole object at once” is tightly connected with his main principle in drawing – “start drawing from the general form and then move to details” or “draw not by adding but by subtracting”. He compares drawing to sculpting. A sculptor begins from a general form of a head, which is somewhat similar to the shape of an egg or a pumpkin, and then gradually creates an image of a particular person by removing unwanted pieces.

In fact, the method of drawing by moving from a general form to specific details was practiced by some teachers in the old Academy. Academy professor A. Egorov (1776-1851) used to say that correctly determined general volumes became a foundation of a good drawing. There are a couple of notes in Chistyakov’s notebooks, which comment on some of Egorov’s thoughts (Moleva & Beliutin, 1953, p. 220).

Chistyakov considered that every form was restricted by planes, “there are no spots in nature, but there is infinity of planes; each plane has its own unique positioning and lighting (semitone),... a harmony of these planes or semitones leads to a good truthful drawing” (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 349). According to Chistyakov, it was very important to understand that tone should complement the structure. A circle with randomly drawn

shadows simply remains a circle with dark spots, but if the shadows are put correctly and complement the structure, a circle visually becomes a sphere (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 348).

This method of drawing by moving from general form to smaller planes and details prevented students from mechanical copying and promoted thoughtful analytical drawing.

Pavel Petrovich used to say that, “obeying a proper working sequence and building a correct structure are most important in drawing” (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 343). He also used to emphasize how important it was to start drawing from the footprint: “a tree grows from the root and it should be depicted in the same way, pretend that the tree is growing in your drawing” (Chistyakov in Moleva & Beliutin, 1953, p. 128).

Chistyakov believed that the proper sequence was vital not only for drawing and painting but for teaching as well. He started his drawing course with basic exercises – he asked his students to draw a pencil, a book, a box, a chair, which were put under an angle to the student’s line of sight. The goal of these seemingly easy assignments was to teach students the basics of perspective and to develop a habit of a certain drawing sequence: constructing a correct footprint and moving up; creating a general form and moving to details, using both line and tone, as constructive tools. Chistyakov emphasized that a correct three-dimensional image of an object is created not only by linear perspective but by tonal contrast as well (the closer – the sharper, the further – the blurrier).

For example, when drawing a chair, Chistyakov asked his students to start by looking at the chair’s general form, a cube, and depict a chair as if it was draped in a fabric, using not only linear structure but tone as well. He emphasized the importance of

starting from a footprint, which served as the basis of the whole form. When moving to details, a student had to constantly compare proportions of different parts of the chair in relation to the base and to each other.

Gradually students advanced to more complicated tasks: drawing a couple of chairs (one was placed on the other), a frame placed on a chair, etc. The goal was to learn how to analyze and draw more complicated forms, starting again from a footprint and general form and moving to detailed drawing. Linear drawing had to be developed along with tonal execution. After mastering complicated set ups students moved to casts and finally, to the human figure.

It is essential to note that Chistyakov set goals in front of his students according to students' individual abilities, but very few students could skip advanced level setups and start directly from casts (Moleva & Beliutin, 1953, 129).

Pavel Petrovich viewed casts as a very important step in artistic education. Firstly, a cast is static and monochrome, and that makes it easier for a student to understand the structure and tonal contrasts. Secondly, a sculpture, from which a cast was made, is a work of art; in other words, a sculptor already made all the necessary analyses of a live model and conveyed his perception of this model in an artwork. Due to all these qualities, casts become a great model for learning the structure of human body.

Drawing a cast of a human head meant to prepare students for working on the portrait of a real person. It is easier to understand the structure of a head using a black and white cast. In addition, a cast is rather generalized already; students are not distracted by miniscule details such as lashes, hair or skin imperfections. When talking about

drawing a head cast, Chistyakov explained the structure of the head as following: “a skull consists of perspectives of various planes; these planes meet and their borders form sort of a net, which becomes a carcass or basis for drawing a head cast... a visual image of a head is formed not only by tone, as many beginners think, but also by the correct placement and perspective of these planes (Repin’s reflections in Moleva & Beliutin, 1953, p. 133). This paragraph evokes images of constructional drawings of a human head and body, made by Albrecht Dürer in 1523.¹⁰ It reflects Chistyakov’s interest in researching old masters’ work and how he managed to reconceptualize this knowledge according to the needs of realistic art in the end of the nineteenth century. It seems that he insisted on such a schematic beginning of a cast head drawing for the sake of understanding of a general form; he wanted his students to realize that drawing a head is not just drawing eyes, lips, nostrils and other details, but primarily a construction of a volumetric image of a whole head.

When drawing a head cast, the crossing between the “eye line” (direction from eye to eye) and the “central line” (from a nose bridge to the chin and up to the crown of the head) should become the basis of a drawing. Both these lines have to be checked according to the vertical direction. Chistyakov also constantly emphasized that lines in drawing were not simply lines, but borders of numerous connected planes, and an image

¹⁰Albrecht Dürer, *Head as an assembly of geometrical planes*, around 1523 and *Stereometric man*, 1523.

of a three-dimensional form was produced by lines and tone simultaneously (Chistyakov, 1953, pp. 355-356).

First, when drawing a head cast, Chistyakov suggested creating an initial frame or carcass by marking the general volume of a head and main plains (forehead, cheeks, chin and planes that lead to the back of the head). At this stage the goal is to define general character and proportions. It is also very important to reflect the perspective of all planes correctly in order to create a feeling of real volume.

The second stage meant gradual movement to smaller and smaller details, while constantly comparing them to the main volume and to each other. The final step was generalization by the means of the tone. This step helped students to avoid disruption of a whole form by small details. “Look carefully at your drawing and then at the cast, ... pick the most intensive shade and finish your tonal differentiation in comparison to this darkest tone, gradually moving from the darkest to the lightest. Shadows and light..., then semitones, and the work is done” (Chistyakov in Moleva & Beliutin, 1953, p. 137). A drawing of a head cast made by Chistyakov’s student Vasilyi Savinskyi could serve as an example (Figure 8).

By learning how to draw a head cast, students became prepared for a much more complicated task - drawing a portrait. Chistyakov once told one of his students: ”Simply to draw a hundred similar heads means making a collection, but to understand how you can draw a head – that means learning” (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 359).

Chistyakov asked his students to make at least a few drawings of different casts from various points of view before moving to drawing a real person. He tried to connect

drawing head casts with drawing a real skull and learning the anatomy of the head. In one of his last head cast assignments, Chistyakov asked his students to draw a particular head cast emphasizing the anatomic structure of the head.

Chistyakov once wrote: “Human is the highest being on our planet; learning about humanity is the highest goal in art” (Chistyakov in Moleva & Beliutin, 1953, p. 140). Therefore, he considered that one of his main responsibilities as an art teacher was to provide his students with the knowledge and skills necessary for drawing or painting a human figure.

After drawing a number of head casts, students had to be able to analyze and understand a complicated structure of human head; they also mastered the proper drawing sequence.

Although Chistyakov considered drawing casts as a valuable exercise on the way to drawing real figures, he constantly emphasized that drawing a cast is vastly different from drawing a real portrait. He helped students to realize the difference between a “dead” cast and a living person. The ability to construct the form of a cast head by the means of planes and their proper perspective could help students, but wasn’t the goal of drawing a real person. In drawing a real head, anatomical structure and the individual character of a person became most important.

The general drawing sequence remained the same. Students started by figuring out the position of a head and a neck in relation to the horizontal and vertical directions and sketched general volumes. After that, students marked the main planes of the head, while keeping in mind the anatomical structure of the head and using lines and tone

simultaneously. Then, students could follow with the details. Again and again, Chistyakov reminded them to constantly check the size and perspective of different parts in relation to one another and to the whole form.

Chistyakov valued exercises in anatomical drawing: students had to pay most attention to anatomy and emphasize the inner structure of the head. These exercises helped them memorize the anatomy of the head and neck. The goal of these assignments was to make a connection between theoretical knowledge and practice, and to form a habit of seeing not only the contour of a head, but also its anatomical structure.

Another kind of drawing exercise that was often offered by Chistyakov was a “character sketch”, where the goal was to grasp the most unique features of a particular person. Chistyakov suggested using the comparison between the main parts of the head in order to determine the most distinctive features of this particular person: “Measure the distance between the eyes, is the distance equal to one eye? Is it less or more? Are the corners of the eyes above the nose? Are you able to divide a head into three equal parts? And so on... You have, to some extent, to emphasize all these features and you’ll get a character” (Chistyakov in Moleva & Beliutin, 1953, p. 142).

In fact, Chistyakov supported the idea of academic art to “improve” the model, but he understood this “improvement” differently. Many academicians tended to idealize the model and made it look more similar to classical beauty canons. By “improvement” Chistyakov meant not idealization, but emphasizing the unique characteristics of a particular person. He used to tell his students that it is important to catch not simply the looks, but also the spirit, the essence of a person – that is how an artist could create a

truly “realistic art image” (Chistyakov in Moleva & Beliutin, 1953, p. 141). For example, in his portrait of *Dzovaninna* (1863) we don’t see idealization, but individual features of a young Italian girl. These features don’t resemble an ancient statue; the portrait is alive and full of unique character (Figure 9).

For Chistyakov, the ability to create a drawing of a human figure in any pose, which is true to life and full of character and emotion, was the pinnacle of the creative skills of an artist (Moleva & Beliutin, 1953, p. 143). Helping his students in reaching this height became his main teaching objective, as was mentioned earlier. After mastering a head portrait, Chistyakov suggested to go back to drawing a cast, but a cast of a human body. The reasoning was the same as for drawing head casts: a static, monochrome and generalized image of a human body made initial studies of the figure somewhat easier. In addition, anatomical structure was often rather emphasized in classical statues (from which most casts were made), and students could clearly see muscles and joints, which are not that obvious in a real human figure. This we can see in the drawing of *ecorshe*, made by Chistyakov’s student M. Vrubel (Figure 10).

The sequence of drawing a figure cast is more complicated than a head cast, but the idea is the same: from general placement, perspective, proportions, and values to smaller details. Chistyakov suggested first marking the size of the figure and the middle point (pelvis) and checking the positioning of the figure in the vertical and horizontal directions. He insisted on drawing the figure from the feet, because the feet carry the whole body, constantly checking proportions according to the middle point (Chistyakov in Moleva & Beliutin, 1953, p. 143). According to Chistyakov, the positioning of the

figure in space could be best determined by an imaginary line connecting the heel with the seventh cervical vertebra. As he also used to say, “the human pose consists of relations of shoulders to hips and the head to the heel” (Chistyakov in Moleva & Beliutin, 1953, p. 144).

Pavel Petrovich also emphasized the structure of the body and considered that it was very important to learn anatomy in parallel with drawing figure casts and then real figures. But, as in the case with moving from head cast to real portrait, Chistyakov stressed vast differences between drawing a static “dead” cast and a live figure (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 360). In fact, Chistyakov left extremely detailed notes on drawing and painting a human figure, practically describing it step by step. A whole paper could be written only about his approach to this difficult task. I’m only presenting a very brief summary of his ideas.

As Pavel Petrovich used to say, the most important thing in drawing a figure is determining the right *positioning* of this figure in space and catching its *movement*. He suggested positioning the figure by marking the footprints and main volume in space, while thinking about perspective. By the *movement* of a figure (even a still figure), Chistyakov meant the perspective and direction of lines and forms, and their relation to one another. The term “a character of main forms’ movement” (in Russian, *character dvizheniya form*) helped Chistyakov to emphasize that the character of the figure and the pose are formed not only by proportions and positioning in space, but also by the positioning of the main parts of the body in relation to one another. Chistyakov suggestions were to “start by carefully looking at the figure in order to understand general

lines and the movement of the figure... Then there could be different approaches. Some students look carefully at the sitter and after mental analyses confidently mark general forms. Other ones constantly briefly look back and forth at the sitter and the paper while quickly marking main volumes by brief thin pencil strokes, they are thinking and drawing simultaneously” (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 361).

According to Chistyakov, the movement of the body mainly depends on connections between the shoulders and the pelvic area, the chest and the abdomen. A student should be able to see and draw parts of the body in connection to each other, by paying attention not only to visible forms, but also analyzing anatomical structure. Symmetrical parts should be drawn simultaneously. Chistyakov also suggested that two points of the body (a point between clavicles and pelvis) can be used as basic points in comparison of body parts, because these two points virtually stay still while the other body parts move (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 364).

One of the most important lessons in Chistyakov’s drawing course were lessons of connection. The goal was to see, understand and draw an organic connection between the parts of a live body (V. Serov’s drawing is called *Lesson in Connection*, see Figure 11).

In a letter to his former student V. Savinskyi in 1884, Chistyakov wrote:”I’m teaching my students now the last, but most important and difficult in drawing - I’m teaching them connection between parts of the figure (live figure, of course)” (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 141). Chistyakov also wrote in his notes that, “connection between body parts is very important. You have to pay attention to main point of the body, the

median line and the footprints, their perspective. Then draw general proportions and movement of the main forms, don't think about portrait qualities and beauty at this point. Only after general decision of the drawing you can follow with details" (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 364).

Chistyakov always stressed that it is very important to emphasize not the little details, but important constructive features of the live body and its character. As was mentioned earlier, he didn't expect a photographic image, but expected a "true realistic image", which could be created by emphasizing main structural qualities and unique characteristics of a particular person, while leaving some minor details rather unfinished. "You have to achieve a great resemblance with nature, but never do exactly as it looks" (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 337). A great Russian writer and Chistyakov's contemporary, Ivan Turgenev, wrote about visual arts and literature, "an artist, who includes all details, will certainly fail. Only when an artist is able to catch and depict the most unique characteristic he can be considered talented and creative" (Turgenev in Moleva & Beliutin, 1953, p. 151). Chistyakov's own drawing of a male figure can be viewed as a perfect illustration to his ideas in drawing (Figure 12). In this drawing a man stands confidently and sturdily on the ground. This figure definitely doesn't demonstrate ideal proportions, but appears alive and a viewer sees a real person. Big groups of muscles and main joints are emphasized by light and shadow, while little details of the face or toes are somewhat left behind. The positioning of the figure in space and the movement of the body are achieved by a perfect perspective, anatomic structure, and connection between body parts. Chistyakov successfully employs both liner and tone techniques. It can be

argued that Chistyakov's practices as an artist and a teacher fully reflected his ideas about art: "True art is not a primitive copy of nature, no; it is a product of a human's mind and soul" (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 306).

Chistyakov also paid attention to drawing draperies. There was even a class in Academy which was called *drapery class*. In this class, students were supposed to learn how to draw and paint different kinds of drapery and clothing. Although Chistyakov admitted the benefits of such exercises, he couldn't agree with learning how to draw clothing just from mannequins. He suggested that this class should be an addition to drawing a real person. Students should first understand the structure of a real figure under the cloth and connect this structure with a visible image, by emphasizing main body parts and joints under the cloths. All creases and folds of clothing should be supported by the structure of a body – a viewer has to believe that there is a body inside the costume. Only after students understand how to achieve this goal, can they master their skills in a drapery class. A simple sketch of a dressed man, made by Valentin Serov in one of Chistyakov's classes (Figure 13), is a great illustration of Chistyakov's teaching. The shape of the sitter's clothing is obviously supported by the mass and pose of the body.

In addition, when making a historical picture, Chistyakov suggested researching not only historical facts about the time period, but also the interiors and clothing. "Start by thinking not only about a face or a figure, but also about a shirt or shoes, decide on the style that suits your theme more, and then start" (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 407). Vasily Savinskyi wrote Pavel Chistyakov in 1884 from Germany, that he was going to German Archeological institute and searching for proper costumes, drawing details (Savinskyi in

Chistyakov, 1953, p. 162). These little details were meant to make a historic artwork look realistic and meaningful for the viewer.

As discussed previously, Chistyakov's goal as a teacher was in providing his students with the knowledge and skills necessary to create realistic artwork. We already know that Chistyakov considered drawing to be fundamental for an artist: "If one can't draw he won't be able to paint either" (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 370). But he also never underestimated the value of painting. After graduating from the Academy, Chistyakov faced serious troubles finding himself as a painter. He realized that the Academy didn't provide him with the knowledge necessary for solving some complicated painting tasks (Ginzburg, 1940, p. 34). He was determined to resolve this issue for himself and for his students as well. V. Vasnetcov wrote: "The foundation of Chistyakov's program was in teaching how to depict nature by means of both drawing and painting" (Vasnetcov in Chistyakov, 1953, p. 341).

Chistyakov viewed color as an additional tool for depicting "an object as it exists" (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 343). An artist has to be able to use color for reflecting the material structure of an object, the distribution of the light, the perspective and the effects of the environment. From Chistyakov's point of view, the challenge lies in creating a harmonious relationship between drawing and painting, in which one doesn't undermine the other but supports it (Moleva & Beliutin, 1953, p. 161). At the same time, a good painter needs to constantly refer to nature in his painting and "always compare colors with what you see in nature, when mixing them and then applying to the canvas" (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 385). According to Chistyakov, the wisdom is in figuring out the

main colors of the object and keeping them as a base and then finding nuances of hues which depend on the environment (Chistyakov, 1953, pp. 182, 374).

In his first painting class, Chistyakov often suggested to his beginning students to copy a colored spot that he painted on a canvas (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 379). Then he placed a real object of a similar color in front of the student and suggested painting this object in its surroundings. This elemental exercise was meant to show the huge difference between copying a painted spot, or an artwork, and painting from nature. It also helped to demonstrate how color changes according to the environment (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 380).

Although Chistyakov considered painting as “the work of soul and feeling” (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 375) and in some initial exercises he asked students to paint quickly and intuitively, he also required his advanced students to paint thoughtfully and “look carefully, compare to nature and then paint” (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 374). In fact, in drawing, Chistyakov taught his students to combine a “sudden glance” with careful analysis in order to build a solid structure and reflect correct proportions and perspective. In painting, this combined approach of intuitive painting and thoughtfulness led to accurate and truthful painting without making an artwork dry or lifeless (Chistyakov, 1953, pp. 374-375, 382). Pavel Petrovich lucidly explained the advantages of this combined approach in one of his letters to Savinskyi, where he talked about painting hair, starting with a quick and emotional layer of more general color, then moving to a deeper analysis of details in order to see subtle nuances (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 377).

According to Chistyakov, students should always remember how much color depends on lighting and environment. For example, he frequently discussed the fact that

the same color looks different in the sunlight than on a cloudy day (Chistyakov, 1953, pp. 371, 408). He also directed students' attention to the fact that colors change according to perspective: "All colors look more grayish or bluish in the distance, but the same colors are bright when they are close to us" (Chistyakov in Moleva & Beliutin, 1953, p. 163).

If in drawing Chistyakov asked for a constant comparison of proportions, in painting he called for a comparison of hues, of lights and shadows and of warm and cold colors. Similar to drawing, in painting, Chistyakov suggested the method of "looking aside the object" (Chistyakov, 1953, pp. 333, 376). This method was meant to help students to better see the relationships between general colors and subtle hues.

Similar to drawing, Chistyakov always emphasized the importance of following a particular order while working on a painting, especially on a portrait. He insisted that, "every painting should be started with a basic drawing. I always teach that" (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 370). This drawing should be carefully thought through in terms of general form, but should not be extremely detailed. Chistyakov suggested that it was rather useless to work on details in the preliminary drawing as all of them would be lost under the initial layer of paint. He advised students to execute the preliminary drawing in charcoal and then follow with a thin layer of one color; he usually suggested umbra paint (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 163).

After the initial drawing Pavel Petrovich suggested determining general colors and broadly starting to paint general forms, while keeping in mind the relationship of the main shades, and comparing them to each other (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 388). In 1886, Chistyakov wrote to Savinskyi, "When starting the painting don't apply paint with short

or disrupted strokes, put color strongly, sturdy, from point to point” (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 203).

The second step was building the form. “Each stroke goes along the form” (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 385). When painting details and subtle hues, a student should always analyze how surrounding colors, lighting and depth change the main colors of the object; a student should also realize that in painting the structure is formed not only by making the main colors lighter or darker, but also by changing them according to environment. “Every hue should be determined by the main color and the surroundings” (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 390). In order to keep objects and their surroundings in harmony, Chistyakov suggested painting them simultaneously; for example, to “put a stroke on a face and immediately another one on the background” (Chistyakov in Moleva & Beliutin, 1953, p. 173).

In addition, students should always remember about the whole while painting details. The intensity of brush strokes should be the same, but the size of strokes should become smaller and smaller (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 390). The artwork was completed by connecting all of the details, by a final generalization for, “the harmony in a painting is reached when all parts of the painting are related to one another” (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 417). Chistyakov’s student Michail Platunov described this process in his memoirs, “the last step of the work was, when a brush was running from one corner to the other, from figure to the background, from drapery to figure, around the whole canvas” (Platunov in Chistyakov, 1953, p. 379).

Chistyakov also thought that when a portrait was too precise and accurate it looked dry and not alive. According to him, knowing when to stop and keeping the strokes strong and vibrant were the most difficult parts of portrait painting. As he said, "In order to make a painting interesting, alive and truthful, an artist should construct it correctly at first, but somewhat dishevel it at the end" (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 387). Chistyakov also suggested analyzing what was important for the painting and what was rather insignificant. Important parts or details had to be emphasized. For example, he advised "to energetically and thoughtfully paint eyes, lips and nostrils and be more relaxed with everything else" (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 386).

Pavel Petrovich was also extremely intrigued by the theory of colors, and particularly, by the relation between warm and cold colors. He often talked about this issue, associating cold colors with static and lifeless things and warm colors - with life and movement. He considered that one of the most important skills of the painter is "the ability to see what hue is dominant in a particular color - reddish or bluish" (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 374). This relationship between warm and cold colors is also vital in painting the human figure. After years of practice and research of old masters' works, Chistyakov concluded that the, "great truth, with which I've foolishly tried to argue, is in the fact the body is pinkish or orange in color, semitones are green and shadow is red; the lights are warm in a sunny day and cold, when it is cloudy" (Chistyakov in Moleva & Beliutin, 1953, p. 172). Also one of his students remembered that Pavel Petrovich taught that "the body is painted from red to green, but the drapery from cold to warm" (in Chistyakov, 1953, p. 388).

In order to increase the feeling and understanding of colors in his students, Chistyakov developed a number of original exercises. For example, red and yellow fabrics were put on a green bush in a summer day; the goal was to catch the relations between light and shadow, green, red and yellow (Moleva & Beliutin, 1953, p. 177).

To advanced students Chistyakov often gave assignments on “character”, where students were asked to reflect a feeling, character or emotion not only by means of composition or drawing, but also by color theme and harmony. “Colors in painting should support the idea” or “if you decided to paint sorrow or misery, your colors should relate to the subject” (Chistyakov, 1953, pp. 394-395). As we already know, this connection between the idea of an artwork and its execution was one of the key themes in Chistyakov’s teaching.

The most detailed discussion of this issue could be found in his correspondence with one of his favorite students, Vasiliy Savinskyi¹¹. In a number of letters the teacher and his student discussed the process of creating an artwork starting from choosing a subject and drawing sketches to the final touches of paint. It is rather obvious that Chistyakov paid equal attention to all steps of the process. As mentioned earlier in the analysis of Chistyakov’s artistic views, he considered that choosing a significant idea for an artwork was one of the most vital steps. This chosen idea has to be not only relevant to the contemporary society, but also to the artist himself. He wrote that, “creating art is not simply a job; art is a vibrant song that comes from your soul” (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 430). The choice of the subject was also very important because “the subject dictates the

¹¹ This correspondence occurred during Savinskyi’s trip to Italy, which he’d been awarded with after graduating the Academy.

manner of painting” (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 422). Chistyakov himself admitted that his artworks rather varied in manner because the ideas behind them were different (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 252).

The subject not only had to be meaningful, but also had to be thought through very well. At the beginning of his art teaching career Pavel Petrovich had already advised his students “not to begin a painting until you thoroughly think about the subject and how to paint it” (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 43). Chistyakov’s descriptions of his ideas for artworks could be compared to telling an emotional and vivid story. He talked about the feelings of the main characters, their reasoning, the historical and social contexts and, of course, about visual imagery (Chistyakov, 1953, pp. 163, 165-167, 196, 412). Interestingly, in Russia the same verb *pisat’* (to write) is used in both meanings *pisat’ kartinu* (painting a picture) and *pisat’ knigu* (writing a book).

After reading Chistyakov’s letters and notes, where he discusses the process of developing ideas for artworks, Moleva and Beliutin’s comparison of Chistyakov’s system with the artistic system of Konstantin Stanislavsky sounds very appropriate. Stanislavsky suggested that actors should not simply act on stage, but really try to live the lives of their characters. And that is what Chistyakov wrote about choosing and developing a subject for an artwork. He believed that the creation of a great artwork is in the ability to root in your subject, to live with it, to think about it all the time and carefully, step by step, reflect the idea by using all your talents and skills (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 397).

But an artist stays apart from a writer or an actor because he is able to convey meaning in visual images. During his lessons on composition, Chistyakov tried to teach

his students the important steps of creating an artwork from the initial choice of its subject to the final solid and persuasive visual image.

During lessons devoted to composition, Chistyakov attempted to cultivate in his students a habit of working on an artwork in a certain order. He taught young artists how to develop ideas not only verbally but also visually, by creating numerous sketches. Pavel Petrovich considered the process of making preliminary sketches as one of the vital steps of creation of an artwork (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 196). Initial sketches were in the form of simple general drawings where the goal was to decide on the general composition of an artwork. By means of simple setups Chistyakov taught how to achieve balance in an artwork (Chistyakov in Moleva & Beliutin, 1953, p. 206). After deciding on the placement of the main figures and objects, students could make initial painting sketches to decide on a color scheme. When the idea was well developed in detailed sketches, a student could follow by making preliminary studies from nature (landscape, portrait, interior studies etc.) and then use these in the final painting. It was important to emphasize significant parts and leave behind minor details.

Chistyakov always stressed that everything should serve the main idea of an artwork; for example, the composition, color scheme, the choice of main characters, their gestures or facial expressions, the visual emphasis of the whole painting. In this sense, according to Chistyakov, a study from nature is rather different from a true work of art, where an artist only uses depiction of real world in order to convey his own ideas (Chistyakov in Moleva & Beliutin, 1953, p. 209).

Overall, Chistyakov's system was aimed at enabling students with the necessary artistic skills and developing in them an understanding of how to create a meaningful work of art.

Unfortunately, there were quite a few differences between Chistyakov's thoughts and teaching practices and the existing academic approach. These differences became a huge obstacle for Chistyakov's teaching career at the Academy. The major disagreement was in realizing a tight connection between art and nature and in viewing art as a reflection of social life. The Academy also was not very enthusiastic about individual studio practice. Many officials viewed it as too much freedom given to individual professors and students (Ginzburg, 1940. pp. 70, 79).

In 1885 Chistyakov wrote to Pavel Tretyakov: "I look around and see that I'm the loner among teachers of my age in the Academy, none of them share my views or support me..." (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 187).

All of this disagreement caused a negative reaction from the board and administration toward Pavel Chistyakov, he was treated with constant oppression and steady antipathy. Sometimes Chistyakov felt that this antipathy also spread toward his most talented students. In his letter to Vasilyi Polenov in 1875 Chistyakov complained that, "the best student in the Academy, Vasilyi Surikov, failed to get the gold medal for not having time to paint calluses.¹² I can't talk about these people¹³ without getting a headache. How hard it is to live among them. But it seems that students love and understand me and that is why I'm trying to gather all my strength" (Chistyakov, 1953, p.

¹² This cost Surikov, who wasn't a rich man, a scholarship for an educational trip to Europe.

¹³ It is clear from the letter that he means the Academy board.

76). Nikolai Bruni also noted in one of his letters: “It is rather gloomy in the Academy lately, some people are trying to spread rumors about Pavel Petrovich and his students in order to harm their reputations” (Bruni in Chistyakov, 1953, p. 557). In his letter to the head of the board in 1881, Chistyakov wrote about his colleagues, ”...if they are not happy with me then they should confront me, not anybody else and absolutely not my students” (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 115).

One of Chistyakov’s favorite students, Vasily Savinskyi, graduated from the Academy in 1882 and Chistyakov wrote to his former student Vasily Surikov: ”One of my students, V. Savinskyi, graduated this year with a gold medal. He is a great artist, who was repressed a lot because of me. After his successful graduation a burden fell off my shoulders - now I can quit my position in the Academy if things start to become extremely unpleasant” (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 128). This devotion to his students speaks volumes about Chistyakov as a teacher. I have decided to include a few reflections of Chistyakov’s students in the next section in an attempt to create the most complete image of him as an art educator.

However, not only Chistyakov’s dedication to his students and to art stopped him from quitting his job at the Academy. Pavel Petrovich viewed his art and pedagogical activities as a service to his country, which he was destined to perform in spite of any troubles (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 109).

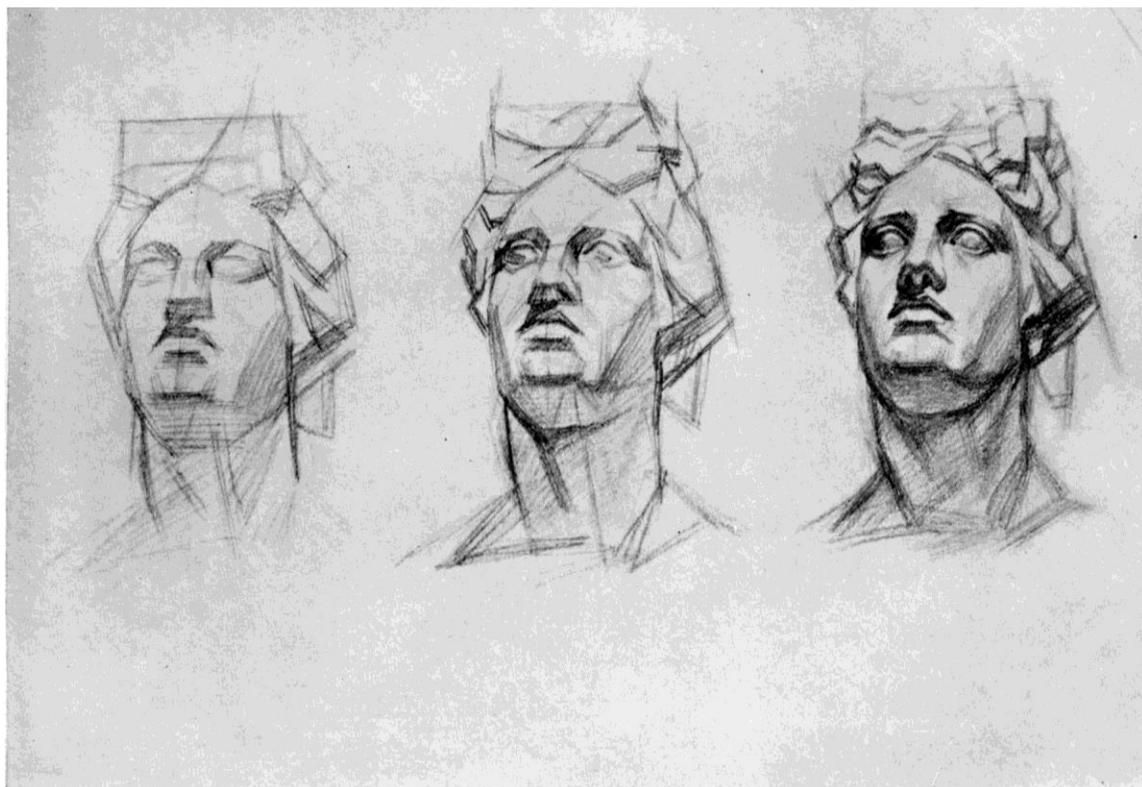


Figure 8: Savinskyi, Head Cast



Figure 9: Chistyakov, Dzovanna, 1863

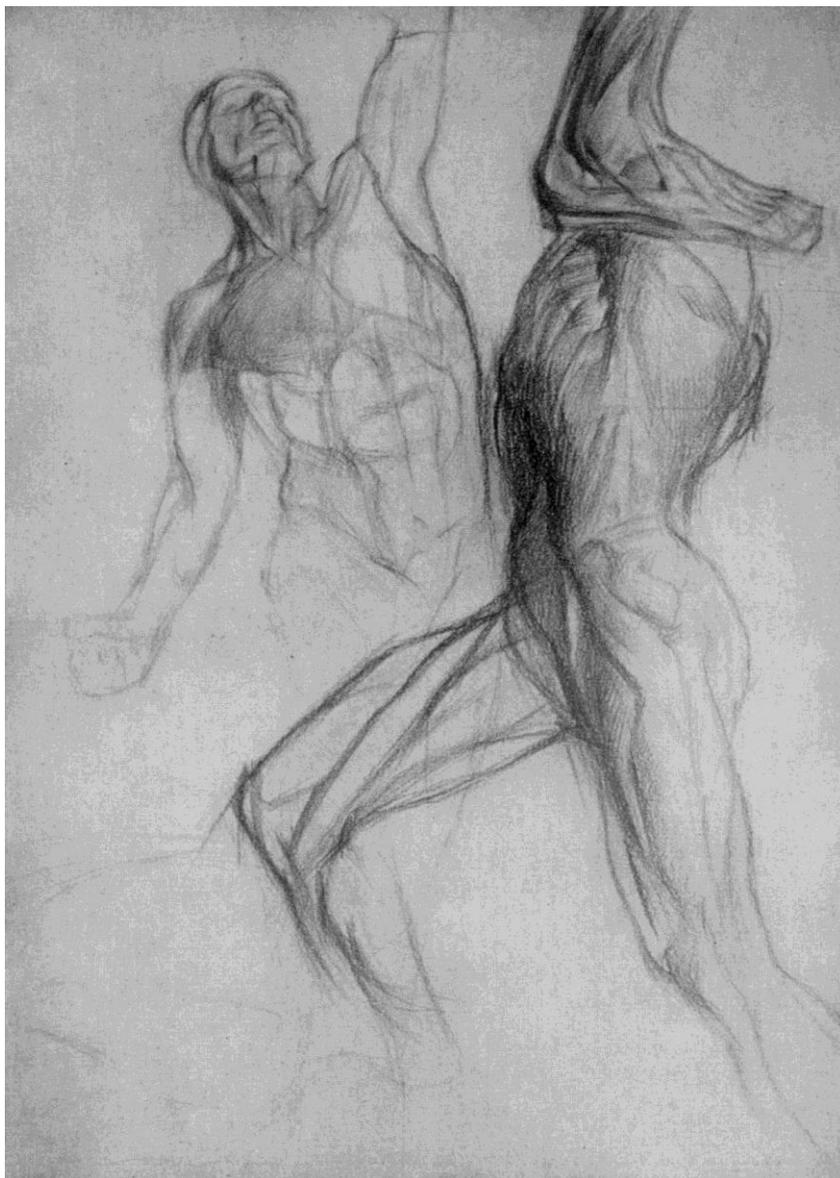
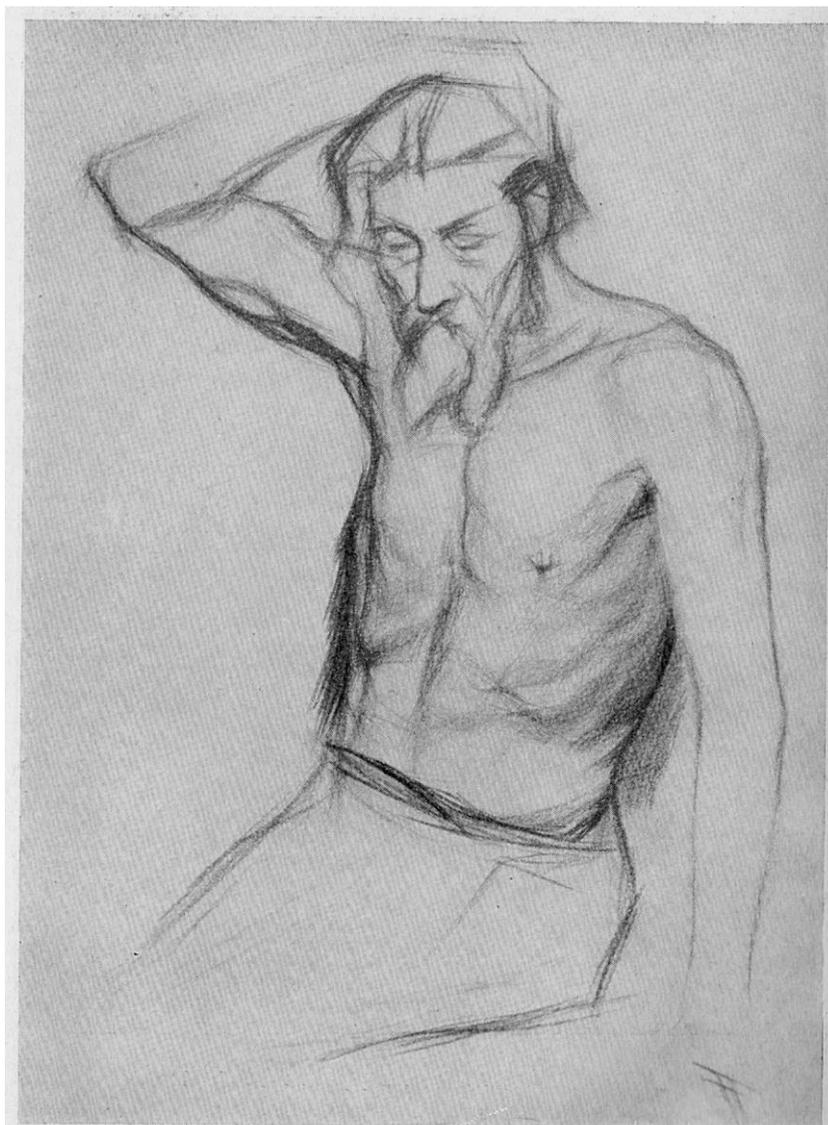


Figure 10: Vrubel, Ekorshe



XII. В. А. Серов. Урок связи. ГРМ.

Figure 11: Serov, Lesson of Connection.

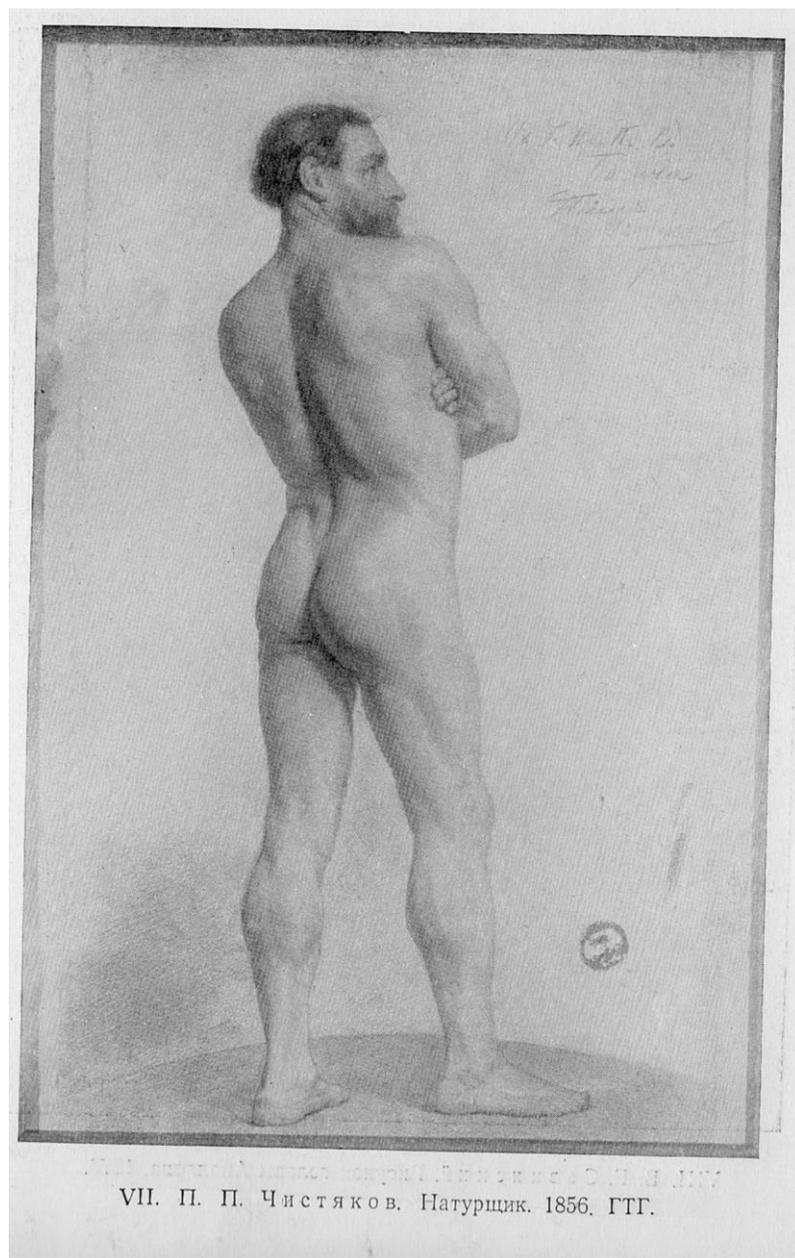


Figure 12: Chistyakov, *Male Model*, 1856



Figure 13: Serov, Male Model, 1884

*All of his advice is so valuable,
so truthful and full of his
personal experience in art and
teaching*
(N. Bruni in Chistyakov, 1953,
p. 500)

Students' Reflections

Although I have already included some of Chistyakov's students' recollections of his teaching methods in this chapter, I consider it extremely important to dedicate at least a couple of pages solely to the reflections of his most renowned students. I believe that their memoirs and thoughts can add to an understanding of Pavel Chistyakov's character and his value to the development of Russian art and art education.

In fact, many of Chistyakov's students kept in touch with him long after they had graduated from the Academy. It is very fascinating to read how Surikov, Polenov, and other well-known artists wrote to Chistyakov from Europe and shared their impressions and thoughts about art exhibitions or European art in general. There are practically no everyday details in Surikov's letter to Chistyakov from Paris in 1883, but only a fascinating story about museums and exhibitions, a discussion of various artists, as well as their technique and artworks (Surikov in Chistyakov, 1953, pp. 132- 138).

Even the most successful artists, such as Y. Repin, V. Surikov, V. Polenov and V. Vasnetsov, sought Chistyakov's practical advice or opinion about their artworks long after their graduations from the Academy. Pavel Petrovich was usually very supportive, but at the same time remained constructive and gently critical. For example, in one of his letters to V. Savinskiy, Chistyakov presented very detailed analyses of Savinskiy's theme

and sketch for a painting, but did so very thoughtfully and, as he himself put it:” I’m not judging or giving advice, I’m simply looking at your sketch and talking to you” (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 167).

After graduating from the Academy in 1870, Vasilyi Polenov, one of his students, asked Chistyakov to allow him to continue his visits to Chistyakov’s studio. In his letter he wrote that, first of all, there were no other teachers at the Academy who knew as much as Chistyakov, and secondly, that only Chistyakov could understand his desire to continue his studies even after graduation (Polenov in Chistyakov, 1953, p. 63). Later, in 1878, Polenov wrote to Chistyakov: ”Your advice is always eye opening, after receiving it, one begins reevaluating his work and looks at it more strictly and seriously, this makes the artwork more strong and spirited in the end” (Polenov in Chistyakov, 1953, p. 89). Also V. Polenov remembered that students of the Academy were astonished by Chistyakov’s painting *Stonecutter* (1870) and *Roman beggar* (1870). Polenov wrote that “the *Stonecutter* was for us an ideal example of amazing drawing and powerful painting” (Moleva, 1962, p. 272). Polenov’s wife, Elena Polenova, was an acclaimed illustrator and applied artist. She graduated from the Academy, where she attended many classes besides Chistyakov’s, but later wrote in her letter to art critic V. Stasov: ”Chistyakov was my first and last teacher” (in Ginzburg, 1940, p. 28).

One of the most celebrated Russian artists, Ilya Repin, was not a formal student of Pavel Chistyakov at the Academy. Repin and Chistyakov became close only after Repin moved to St. Peterburg in 1880s. At that time Repin often visited Chistyakov in his studio and also became well acquainted with many of his students (Valkenier, 1990, p. 113).

Repin advised one of his most talented private students – Valentin Serov – to join Chistyakov’s studio at the Academy. He characterized Chistyakov as “an excellent teacher who has respect for classicism in painting but not for dry academism and encourages his pupils’ individual inclinations” (Valkenier, 1990, p. 113).

After somewhat ambiguous reviews of Repin’s painting *Zaporozhe Cossacks Composing a Letter to the Turkish Sultan* (1891), the artist wrote to his friend A. Suvorin, “But I can feel the unity of the composition, the harmony of the painting... Some experienced artists whom I trust (for example, Chistyakov and some others) are on my side and congratulated me. You see, I’m not alone...” (Repin in Liaskovskaya, 1953, p. 159). Chistyakov was also among a few artists who shared Repin’s concerns and worries about the future of the Russian painting school (Liasovskaya, 1953, p. 186).

In a letter to P. Tretiakov in 1882 Repin wrote, ”There is one bright person at the Academy - Pavel Chistyakov. He is a true teacher. The only one! Just because of him we still get great artists like Savinskyi” (Repin in Chistyakov, 1953, p. 122).

N. Bruni in one of his letters recalled that, when he visited Tretyakov’s gallery for the first time, he was alone, but he didn’t feel like that because in his mind he was discussing artworks with Chistyakov (Bruni in Chistyakov, 1953, p. 198).

V. Serov always appreciated Pavel Petrovich a lot and wrote in 1894 that only Chistyakov’s opinion was valuable to him during studies at the Academy (Serov in Chistyakov, 1953, p. 265).

In a New Year’s greeting card, D. Kardovskyi and I. Grabar wrote to Chistyakov that “the more we work and learn the better we understand that you were the only real

teacher at the Academy. We wish that everything you teach will spread fast through all Russian schools” (Kardovskyi & Grabar in Chistyakov, 1953, p. 269).

V. Vasnetcov expressed his appreciation for Chistyakov’s advice in the letter, in 1902, ”Your experienced eye always notices these vital artistic nuances without which an image would be dead” (Vasnetcov in Chistyakov, 1953, p. 273). V. Vasnetcov also remembered that, “Pavel Petrovich was against any clichés. He never enforced the same program on every student, but was able to find individual ways to each one of his students...He was simply an interpreter between nature and students” (Vasnetcov in Chistyakov, 1953, p. 341).

It was not only Chistyakov’s students and friends who valued his advice. Maybe because of his known modesty and truthfulness, many important Russian collectors of art valued Chistyakov’s professional and honest opinion. Among these collectors was Pavel Tretyakov, the founder of Tretyakov’s art gallery in Moscow¹⁴. Tretyakov and Chistyakov led an extensive letter correspondence where they exchanged their opinions about artworks and exhibitions. Tretyakov often sought out Chistyakov’s advice. In one of the letters, Tretyakov wrote, ”I’m waiting to hear your thoughts on the latest *Wanderers* exhibition. It is extremely interesting to learn your opinion: always original and sharp. I value it a lot” (Tretyakov in Chistyakov, 1953, p. 87).

¹⁴ The Gallery was founded by a Russian merchant and philanthropist Pavel Tretyakov. He donated his collection to the city of Moscow in 1892. The State Tretyakov gallery has since become a world-famous museum. Nowadays it contains more than 170 000 works by Russian artists from the early religious paintings to the modern art objects (from <http://www.tretykovgallery.ru/en/>, accessed 1/10/2013).

Finally, I'd like to conclude this part with a paragraph from the memoirs of M. Nesterov: "Every time I visited St. Petersburg I tried to visit Pavel Petrovich in his private studio or in the mosaic studio at the Academy. I loved Pavel Petrovich as a teacher and as an artist and extremely valued his system. I loved his original mind and his unique way of talking and his genuinely Russian soul" (Nesterov in Chistyakov, 1953, p. 509).

Drawing, as a type of learning about nature, is a part of knowledge itself and requires as much brain activity as other school subjects.
(Chistyakov, 1953, p. 437)

Teaching Art in Public Schools

In addition to his artistic and teaching careers Chistyakov was very concerned with the general development of art education in Russian public schools. Pavel Petrovich probably held this issue so close to his heart because he received his initial art training in a secondary school in the town of Bezetsk. Without it, he would have never had a chance to study at the Academy. Chistyakov even remembered his first art teacher, Ivan Pylaev, whose name he included in one of his autobiographies (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 521). Chistyakov also considered it very important that children from different social classes had equal opportunities to study art. He believed that “artists from various social backgrounds could only raise the average level of art” (in Ginzburg, 1940, p. 65).

Art education in the primary and secondary schools in Russia was rather miserable at the time. In 1864, art was excluded from the list of required subjects. The reasons cited included “time limitations” and the “lack of qualified art teachers” (Rostovtcev, 1982, np). Chistyakov, himself, described the main problems associated with teaching art in public schools as follows: the main problem was in excluding art from the list of required subjects; in addition to that, there was constant copying from poor quality originals, almost total absence of any suitable programs, a mixture of art and

technical drawing, concentration only on the applied qualities of art and very poor resources and classrooms¹⁵ (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 438).

After returning from Italy in 1870, Chistyakov not only began his pedagogical activities at the Academy as an adjunct professor but also, along with some other prominent artists and professors, he actively tried to promote and develop art education in Russian public schools (Rostovtcev, 1982, np).

In 1870, special art competitions for public school students were initiated by the Academy. The goal was to not only encourage children to make and study art, but also to analyze existing art programs and develop the most efficient ones. Any school was able to participate in this competition once every three years. Art teachers had to submit artworks for the period of one year from the best student in the class, one artwork from each student of the class, and a methodological memo and curriculum vitae from the teacher. Everything was viewed and discussed by a designated jury, comprised of a few Academy members and faculty. The creators of the best artworks and teachers, all received awards. Printed results and recommendations were mailed out to each one of the participating schools (Rostovtcev, 1982, np).

Pavel Chistyakov became an active member of this committee from the start. In his recommendations he didn't criticize individual artworks, but mostly made general or more specific suggestions to the teachers, such as, "while drawing geometric objects students should follow rules of perspective, . . . the teacher should explain how the image of the object can change according to the student's point of view", or "light the casts

¹⁵ This is not an exact quote, but a brief summary of Chistyakov's thoughts.

better to make the contrast between lights and shadows more visible”, or “in painting you should pay more attention to the variety of hues and semitones” (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 443).

In 1872, art returned to the list of required subjects in primary and secondary schools. A special committee was formed in order to create the most appropriate and effective program for teaching art in public schools. Many prominent Russian artists and members of the Academy participated in this committee. Among them were N. Ge, I. Kramskoy, P. Vereschagin and P. Chistyakov (Rostovtcev, 1982, np).

Chistyakov left a number of notes with suggestions and thoughts on teaching art in public schools. He considered it very important “to teach students to see and understand a real form and then teach them how to draw it” (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 436).

Chistyakov strongly opposed copying and constantly noted the importance of drawing from nature, to think about what you are drawing, and to develop the ability to see and understand nature. “In primary school you can use the example of Americans, let children draw whatever they see and as they see it” (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 439). Gradually a teacher should explain how to see and draw an object starting from general forms and moving to details, and how to mix complex colors. Pavel Petrovich believed that it was important to study, understand and practically apply the basic laws of perspective. “When drawing from nature, a teacher should explain to his students an important concept: he should put a ruler in front of the object and under the ninety degree angle to the line of view of a student and explain that the horizontal sides of a piece of paper are equal the direction of the ruler, everything in the drawing has to relate to the horizontal border in

the same way as in nature it relates to the ruler” (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 436). Chistyakov believed in the benefits of drawing from wire models in secondary schools; he thought that it could help students to better understand the structure of the form (in wire models students were able to see otherwise invisible parts of objects) and perspective (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 438). He also suggested that it would be beneficial for older students to draw from simple casts¹⁶. Interestingly, Chistyakov proposed that it is especially important for primary school students to finish a drawing in one lesson (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 438).

Overall, Chistyakov left many notes on teaching art in primary and secondary schools. Some of them are very similar to the basic rules that he used while teaching in his own studio; the main similarity being an emphasis on teaching how to draw from nature. At the same time, Pavel Petrovich always insisted that teaching art in public schools and in professional institutions should be rather different, because of the difference in goals.

Chistyakov considered art education in public schools as an important part of the whole educational process because it promotes children’s thinking abilities and helps children to learn about the world. “Teaching drawing at schools should be put at the same level as any other required subject because it develops in children the ability to look and think. But drawing can be fully beneficial only when it is taught rationally, when a student learns how to correctly look at nature and acquires the knowledge and skills needed for truthful depiction of nature according to objective laws. This goal can be

¹⁶ Chistyakov’s ideas about benefits of drawing from casts were included in the part on his teaching methods.

reached by any student when a proper program and adequate methods are used”

(Chistyakov, 1953, p. 439).

DISCUSSION

When I decided to conduct this research, I was generally moved by personal and professional curiosity, hoping to discover some interesting methodological approaches and pedagogical ideas suitable for our contemporary educational environment. However, the more I learned through my research, the more I was inspired by Pavel Chistyakov's unique personality, talent and dedication to his profession. In the process of the research, it turned out to be evident that, although Chistyakov's methodology was rather innovative, it became effective only as a part of his personal pedagogical system. Palmer suggests that, congruence between methodology and the teacher's identity greatly improves teaching effectiveness (Palmer, 1993, np). Thus, Chistyakov's methodology cannot be viewed separately from his pedagogical approach and from his identity. One of his students remembered that, "Pavel Petrovich had such an extraordinary and vigorous personality, that simply his appearance in the room infused you with energy and enthusiasm for work" (Sallos in Chistyakov, 1953, p. 428).

Diana Korzenik states, "teaching always will remain a personalized, individual work carried on by many people with different backgrounds and biases" (Korzenik, 1993, p. 200). As we have already found out throughout the numerous memoirs of Chistyakov's students, Pavel Petrovich was an unusual person. The fact that he was a serf's son who became a full Professor at the Academy of Fine Arts alone says a lot about the magnitude of Chistyakov's talent and dedication to his profession. The importance of such dedication, "of intellectual and emotional commitment to one's own work" is noted

by Elliot Eisner in his work *What the Arts Taught Me about Education* (1991).

Chistyakov's students also mentioned his devotion to art and teaching along with an interest in social life, science, music, and religion (Moleva & Beliutin, 1953, p. 96).

These sides of Chistyakov's personality helped him inspire students to learn, think and create. In turn, learning about the world can help to better understand one's self, and according to Chistyakov, this was also very important, because an artist should paint only things that interest and touch him deeply (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 45).

Chistyakov's students also remembered him as a talented and passionate speaker, who was able to engage students in important discussions about art and life in general (Shilkova in Moleva & Beliutin, 1953, p. 95). Chistyakov's ability to deliver his thoughts in unusual and very memorable ways was praised by many¹⁷ (Mendeleeva in Gizburg, 1940; Nesterov in Chistyakov, 1953; Tatarinova, 2005). One of his female students recalled that, "his comments were always so bright, clear and timely, that I have remembered them all my life" (Mertc in Chistyakov, 1953, p. 428).

All of these personal qualities increased the effectiveness of Chistyakov's teaching methods, and I believe that with some effort and dedication, some of these important qualities can be cultivated in many devoted educators.

While discussing commonplaces as interrelated curricular components, Bolotin Joseph states that, "the fourth commonplace, teachers, includes educators' subject matter erudition, their personalities... and their biases and political stances" (Bolotin Joseph,

¹⁷ Due to this fact it was extremely difficult for me to translate Chistyakov's notes into English. I feel that many of my translations failed to reflect Chistyakov's manner of speaking and simply reflected his main ideas or thoughts.

2010, p. 1). Indeed, Chistyakov's bright personality, brilliant artistic skills and versatile erudition, constant efforts to improve his art and teaching, and his active social position became great additions to his methodology and pedagogy. Although Chistyakov's students greatly appreciated his personal qualities, most of them reserved their highest praise for his innovative methodology and pedagogical approaches. Even after establishing themselves as acclaimed artists, many of Chistyakov's former students continued to seek his professional advice. One of the most acclaimed Russian painters, Ylia Repin, proclaimed Pavel Petrovich an excellent teacher and, obviously not without reason, Repin suggested his most talented student Valentin Serov continue his studies at Chistyakov's studio.

When I discuss the innovativeness of Chistyakov's methodology, it is essential to remember the historical context, as was previously mentioned in the *Methods and Review of Literature* chapters. His methods and approaches were influenced by certain rather radical philosophical ideas as well as the changing socio-cultural environment of the second part of the nineteenth century. His dedication to realism and to the idea of a deep connection between art and social life deeply influenced his educational philosophies as a whole.

As we already know, Chistyakov believed that in order to be able to find significant ideas for paintings, an artist had to be very well educated generally and socially active. However, without technical skills an artist would be able to artistically express neither his dreams and feelings, nor the beauty of the world (Chistyakov in Moleva and Beliutin, 1953, p. 94). Thus, from Chistyakov's point of view, the main goals

of artistic education lay in learning both *what* to depict and *how*. It was according to these goals that Pavel Petrovich developed his educational philosophies and teaching methods. It could also be stated that Pavel Chistyakov's career as an art teacher resulted in not just a few methodological improvements, but in a whole pedagogical system, which was based on the revision of the established teaching methods and their accommodation to the changing needs of the society (Moleva, 1962, p. 263).

In one of his letters to Tretyakov in 1894, Chistyakov acknowledged that he had been able to create a complete and effective teaching system and expressed his regrets about the fact that he had never published anything about it. He left hundreds of notes on teaching art, and was even working on a proposal for a book (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 299), but his plans went awry. Although during his lifetime some of his ideas were presented in a series of articles in the monthly journal, *Scientific Review*, in 1894; these were all written by A. Trachevskiy, not by Chistyakov himself. Chistyakov's pedagogical ideas and methodology were mostly spread throughout Russia by hundreds of his students, many of whom became art teachers in public schools and higher institutions, with some even founding their own art schools (Ginzburg, 1940, p. 104). A number of publications by Ginzburg and Moleva and Beliutin in the middle of the twentieth century also helped keep Chistyakov's legacy alive.

On the one hand, some of Chistyakov's concepts, which appeared quite innovative during his time, may seem rather naive and obvious to a contemporary art educator. On the other hand, many of his methods and approaches can still be very useful and seem relevant even today.

The five-year curriculum in the Art Education department at the Moscow State Teachers Training University, from which I graduated, is structured very similarly to the art curriculum suggested by Pavel Petrovich, with the exception of a sixth year of individual studio practices. We started with simple set-ups, gradually moving to head casts, real portraits, and finally to body casts and the human figure. The goal was always to start from a general sketch of large volumes, while paying attention to the proportional relationship between main parts of the composition, and then slowly move to details. At some point we even drew a head cast known as an *obrubovka*. It was reminiscent of Albrecht Dürer's *Head as an assembly of geometrical planes* (1523), and perfectly blended into Chistyakov's explanation of objects' structures through the use of connected planes. We studied anatomy and perspective as separate subjects, which were taught in parallel with drawing and painting of the human head and body. I even remember one particular assignment on perspective, when we were asked to walk around the city on our own and sketch various interesting perspective views.

These similarities can possibly be traced to the fact that the Academy of Fine Arts, with its classical traditions, greatly influenced art education at all levels and institutions in Russia and Pavel Chistyakov, as an Academy graduate himself, used a lot from classical training in his own teaching practices. At the same time, it could be suggested that some of Chistyakov's innovative ideas, gradually spread by his students and followers, became a part of the curriculum not only at the Academy, but also at many other art schools and colleges. Nowadays, Chistyakov is frequently referred to and cited in books and papers on art education. Books by a former head of the Drawing

Department at Moscow Teachers Training University, Nikolay Rostovtcev (1983, 1984, and 1989) serve as an example. The author of one of the most popular books on teaching drawing in Russia, Nikolay Li (2003)¹⁸, also often refers to Pavel Chistyakov and uses a similar rationale in explaining how to draw a human head or body. All of these publications reflect one of Chistyakov's main teaching objectives – to teach students how to draw objects as they exist in reality, starting with general volume and moving to the details.

The Moscow art school for children #1, founded in 1934, which I graduated from, and art school for children #1 in Yekaterinburg, founded in 1946, are among the oldest Russian art schools for children. The Moscow school carries the name of Valentin Serov, one of Chistyakov's most renowned students; the school in Yekaterinburg proudly carries the name of Pavel Chistyakov himself. In testimonies found on these schools' websites, you can find that both schools offer systematic and successive programs in the arts and strive to carry on the best academic traditions, while also utilizing the most effective innovations¹⁹. This is exactly what Pavel Chistyakov tried to do.

Among Chistyakov's most progressive concepts were, as they are now known, inquiry-based learning and an individual approach. These concepts are still actively discussed in the contemporary educational press, although they are often somewhat modified or enriched with additional meanings.

¹⁸ This book, *Osnovy uchebnogo akademicheskogo risunka* (Basics of academic drawing), is rather popular among educators teaching at different levels in art schools and colleges. There were a few editions of this book since 2003.

¹⁹ Information is taken from websites: <http://www.legendadance.ru/ist/> and <http://pionerart.ru> (accessed January, 2013).

A number of students vividly remembered Chistyakov's tactic of giving them intriguing clues or hints, which helped the students to overcome certain difficulties in their work or to solve problems and complete assignments. His goal was also to avoid directly pointing out and correcting students' mistakes, but to instead teach them how to find mistakes on their own (Baruzdina in Chistyakov, 1953, p. 427).

Pavel Petrovich once wrote that, "since his childhood he loved figuring out everything on his own" (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 513) and he believed that his role as a teacher was "to lead students to understanding and solving problems and not to primitively correct or even to shame" (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 188). This was a difficult and challenging path, which was not shared by other Academy professors. This path requires much more effort, intelligence and involvement from the teacher than the simple way of mechanical knowledge transfer. Unfortunately, nowadays many teachers still prefer the second, more simplistic, but less effective model of teaching. That is why the plea for including inquiry-based learning into teaching practices still often appears in publications, such as *A Need to Return to Conscience and Consciousness in Art Education* by Jerome Hausman (2010), and *Teaching Millennials* by Angela McGlynn (2005), among many others. In the volume, *What the Best College Teachers Do* (2004), Bain recommends to "focus on stimulating students' involvement rather than teacher's performance" and "stimulate students' thinking" (Bain, 2004, p. 58). The models of teaching craft as "knowledge building" and as "problem-solving" are described in *Contextualising Craft: Pedagogical Models for Craft Education* by Sinikka Pollanen (2009). In addition, Chistyakov's idea of the alternation of self-assignments and required

ones, is similar to the contemporary ideas of students' involvement in curriculum modifications, which are discussed by Rudduck and Flutter in *Pupil Participation and Pupil Perspective: 'carving a new order of experience'* (2000).

Today, we are very well aware of the benefits of an individual approach to art education, but in the second part of the nineteenth century this concept seemed rather novel. As previously presented in the *Findings*, Pavel Petrovich respected students' individual talents and ideas. He believed that, "a teacher should nurture students' trust in their abilities, but do it according to the talent and skill level of each individual; always remember that, what one can digest, another can choke on" (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 430).

Chistyakov took into consideration the individual abilities of each student and often gave individual assignments. As Varvara Baruzdina remembered, "Pavel Petrovich was able to see individual talents and the unique abilities of each student and he taught us according to these abilities, that is why his students' art works are so different and don't resemble his own style. We were solving the same problems, using the same laws, but different approaches" (Baruzdina in Chistyakov, 1953, p. 426). The individual approach, as well as inquiry-based, demands additional efforts and certain flexibility from the instructor. It is quite difficult to practice it in our crowded classrooms. In addition, an individual approach nowadays is very much intertwined with multicultural education and notions of identity, like in "Teaching Millennials" by McGlynn, (2005) or in "The city as a site for interdisciplinary teaching and learning" by Soganci & Smith-Shank (2011).

Chistyakov's idea, that art should be tightly connected to social life, seems more relevant than ever. Place-based pedagogy, connection to local communities, and social

justice issues raised in art education all reflect Chistyakov's ideas to a certain degree. Articles, such as "Destination Raval Sad" by Trafi-Prats (2009), or "Emergent Places in Preservice Art Teaching" by Powell & Lajevic (2011) explore connections to local communities.

Interestingly, the problem of balancing teaching with personal art practice, which troubles many art teachers today, already existed more than a century ago. Chistyakov constantly advocated the importance of the professional training of art educators that should include both artistic and pedagogical aspects. He also stated how crucial it is for an art educator to create art and constantly advance his/her skills and expand his/her knowledge. But at the same time, Pavel Petrovich often complained that teaching greatly limited his own artistic practice. Contemporary art educators often come across the same problems, as we can find in some teachers' reflections in Lynn Beudert's book *Work, Pedagogy and Change: Foundations for the Art Teacher Educator* (2006).

Another very sensitive issue today is the issue of critique. From publications, it becomes evident that many students fear critique in studio courses. From my own experience, I can clearly understand why. Here, the most common problems are that students' feelings can be hurt by their professors' harsh comments and that negative aspects are often more emphasized than positive ones (Klebesadel & Kornetsky, 2009). Students hope to get constructive feedback, given in a respectful and encouraging manner, instead of subjective and often personal remarks made by the teacher (Blair, 2006, p. 886).

From students' reflections it seems that Pavel Chistyakov found an effective and respectful way of discussing students' artworks and giving advice. Maybe this was the result of his natural tact or a thoughtful pedagogical act, but more likely, it was a combination of both. He was very considerate of his students' feelings, as one of them recalled, "Pavel Petrovich could introspect people and their souls; he could perfectly feel their mood" (Merte in Chistyakov, 1953, p. 428). In one of his letters to Botkin, Chistyakov said that, "a good teacher never hits his students with a stick²⁰ in the case of the student's mistake, but with the help of hints and explanations tries to carefully put him on the right road" (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 429).

I believe that since all these issues and ideas concerned Chistyakov more than a century ago and still remain relevant to contemporary art educators, it could be suggested that they are vital for the whole field of art education and deserve our special attention.

Finally, I'd like to discuss an issue, which I believe has been one of the most argued about issues in art education for the past two hundred years. This is the matter of justifying why art must be included in the curriculum of public schools. Over a period of a couple of centuries, art educators have supplied numerous reasons as to why art should be taught at schools. These usually seem to be effected by their contemporary social, political, cultural and economic situations. Many wonderful publications offer engaging discussions of this issue, among them are *Art Making and Education* by Brown & Korzenik (1993), *A History of Art Education* by Efland (1990), and *History of Educational Methods in Art Education*, by Rostovtcev (1982).

²⁰ In this context, this phrase is used as a figure of speech.

Naturally, both the methodology and pedagogical approaches of art teachers have been heavily influenced by the reasons provided for including art in their schools' curriculums. For example, the second part of the nineteenth century saw drawing enter into public school curriculums due to a huge demand in educated workers corresponding to the increased industrial development in America and later in Russia (Efland, 1990). The drawing programs of that time period were rather utilitarian. They focused on descriptive geometry, rather than creative drawing. Although Pavel Chistyakov passionately argued in favor of teaching perspective within drawing lessons in schools, he believed that the objective was not in teaching children how to produce better technical drawings, but to help them to realistically draw from nature. He also strongly opposed using measuring tools when giving drawing lessons to younger children, as he thought that such practices could interfere with the development of their eye-hand coordination (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 436). Chistyakov also constantly argued that art and descriptive geometry had to be taught as two separate subjects and opposed the replacement of art with geometry and constant copying, and the teaching of art only for jobs (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 438).

Another argument in support of public school art education, which is quite different from teaching for job skills, is "art making for the spirit" or for self-expression. At first glance, it seems that since Pavel Chistyakov came from an academic background, his teaching ideas would have nothing to do with self-expression. However, many proponents of artistic self-expression shared values similar to Chistyakov's. Among these are the importance of individuality, the careful study of the works of various masters, and

the reflection of children's interests and feelings (Korzenik, 1993). As has been previously mentioned, Pavel Petrovich respected the individual talents of his students and also considered that every artist should paint or draw the subjects that were most meaningful for him. But it is very important to note that when Chistyakov discusses individual talents and ideas of his students, he mostly talks about his adult and young adult students, as opposed to children in public school settings. When giving advice about school programs, he suggests a larger variety of artistic assignments and the use of an inquiry-based approach (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 440). From the material that I was able to research, it is hard to support an argument that Chistyakov was in favor of an individual approach in secondary schools.

However, along with respecting individual talents, Chistyakov also extremely valued artistic skills and knowledge, because without it one "can never artistically express his dreams, feelings and the beauty of the world" (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 482). A similar idea is discussed by Smith-Shank in *Pre-Service Elementary Teacher' Stories of Arts and Education* (1993), in which she also refers to Gardner (1980). Smith-Shank asserts that drawing skills are important and that, "children want to learn to draw representationally, but in the United States as a rule, they do not receive systematic instruction in drawing" (Smith-Shank, 1993, p. 50).

Art making for study skills, "for better grasping of other subjects", is one of the most popular rationales for including art into public school curriculums (Korzenik, 1993, pp. 129-138). In addition, many contemporary art educators view the arts as practices that "develop thinking skills and enlarge understanding" (Eisner, 1991, p. 42) or as a subject

that, “teach a specific set of thinking skills rarely addressed elsewhere in the curriculum” (Winner & Hetland, 2008, p. 29). More and more art teachers argue not for a simple interdisciplinary approach to art education, but for deeper art integration into curriculum (Lykova, 2010; Marshall, 2005; Savenkova, 2010). It seems that for Chistyakov, teaching art to develop thinking skills in order to expand the understanding of the world and one’s self is the most important reason for including art into school curriculums. But in order to be a valuable and respectful part of the curriculum, art has to be taught “properly,” and, as we know, Chistyakov’s ideas on the proper approach to art education imply that the student learns about artistic laws and techniques systematically and successively, while simultaneously learning about the world and him/herself (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 439). In this sense, one of the ideas of another acclaimed Russian educator, Vasilyi Sukhomlinsky (1918-1970), appears very similar to Chistyakov’s. Although Sukhomlinsky was not an art teacher, he considered that art has to be included into the curriculum as it is able to enrich students’ knowledge and add to their understanding of the world; art can be a valuable tool in promoting students’ cognitive development (Cockerill, 1999).²¹

In conclusion, I’d like to return to Efland’s idea that, in the twentieth century “the conflict in art education has been between those intent upon teaching the content of art and those seeing it as self-expression” (Efland, 1990, p. 263). It seems that by means of his methodology and personal pedagogical approaches, Pavel Petrovich Chistyakov was able to resolve this conflict, at least for his own teaching practice. His goal was to teach

²¹ Overall, much more similarities could be found between pedagogical approaches of Pavel Chistyakov and Vasilyi Sukhomlinsky, who was a progressive holistic educator and worked in Ukraine in the second part of the twentieth century.

students essential artistic skills, which could become the foundation for their personal artistic language and could serve them in expressing themselves. Pavel Petrovich used all his artistic talents, knowledge and various pedagogical approaches in order to achieve this goal. He wrote in one of his notebooks that, “each talent has its unique language, its individual style, and that is why a teacher should teach fundamental skills, not style; a teacher should nurture students’ talents instead of suppressing them from the beginning” (Chistyakov, 1953, p. 424). After all, each student’s individual style is an essential part of expressing his/her unique identity.

Unfortunately, as I consider Chistyakov’s legacy, I have trouble identifying more than a couple of teachers throughout the fifteen years of my own art education in Russia who actually cared about their students and about teaching, in general. Anderson-Levitt states in her paper “Globalization and Curriculum” (2008) that concentration on the content of the subject and methodology, but not pedagogy, are stressed in Russian education. This feels like a huge problem for Russian art education; pedagogy shyly hides behind strong methodology. One can only hope that not only Chistyakov’s methodology, but also his pedagogical approaches can be practiced by future generations of art educators. I truly believe that his system, with slight modifications, could be successfully adapted to various teaching environments and students’ abilities. I feel that the concept of learning artistic skills in order to be able to express one’s beliefs, feelings and ideas in connection to life, is the cornerstone of Chistyakov’s teaching philosophy.

In addition, I hope that this research can add to both the broad picture of the field of art education and to understanding the challenges of the profession of an art teacher. I

also believe that it can contribute to better understanding between Russian and American educators, and to a general understanding of Russian culture as well. This understanding can be furthered by my translations of the Russian sources cited previously, many of which have never been translated before.

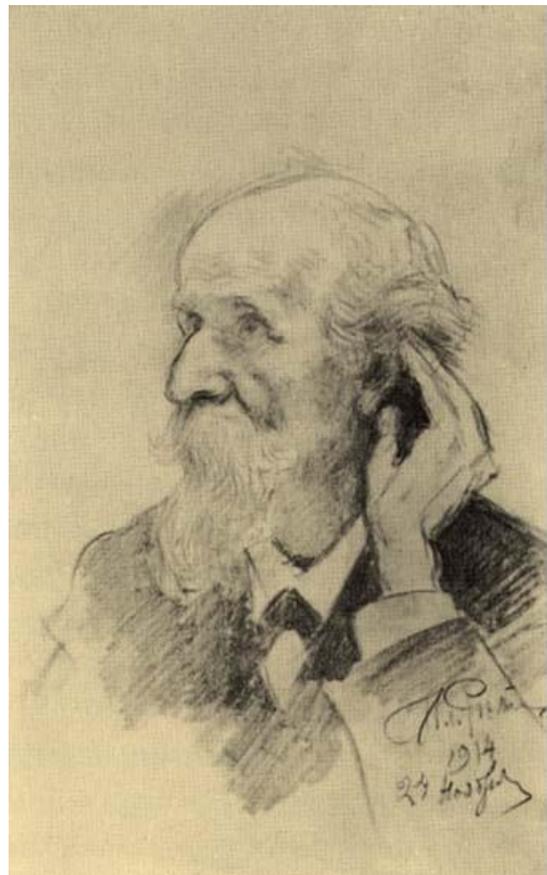


Figure 14: Repin, P. P. Chistyakov, 1914

A SHORT PERSONAL REFLECTION

Not long ago my nine-year-old son, Alex, was drawing a picture of a cat, while looking at the cover of one of his favorite books. At one point he came up to me and asked for help. I glanced at his drawing and noticed a lot of erased lines; he was clearly trying very hard, but could not reach the desired result. My first inclination was to tell him that the proportions were wrong: the head was too small and the legs were rather short. But instead of simply pointing out his mistakes, I suggested that he look at a whole image of a cat, visually compare the size of the head to the body, then sketch the main parts of the figure with thin lines, and once it seemed right move from the whole to smaller details. Alex returned to his drawing. After some time he came to me and showed his picture, I was stunned. It was one of his best drawings so far – I couldn't believe that his older brother hadn't helped him. Alex seemed really happy with the impression his drawing made on me. Over a period of time he produced a number of different drawings that were much more advanced than his earlier ones. It seemed that my advice helped him and he was pretty happy with the results. But the most amazing thing was that one day he came to me and said, "Thank you for advising me to draw from general form to little details, it really helps". Honestly, that is really what happened; I'm not making it up for the sake of an impressive ending!

It was not the first time I have given my son advice about his art, but he had never thanked me like that before. Obviously, this time it really made a difference for him. It helped him to improve his art and he felt it. One thoughtful piece of advice given at the

right time can be worth weeks of simple corrections and I can only say, “Thank you, Pavel Petrovich Chistyakov”...

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