

Vita Susak. *Ukrainian Artists in Paris: 1900-1939*. Translated by Serhiy Synhayivsky (main text and notes) and Anna Susak (“A Dictionary of Ukrainian Artists in Paris”), edited by Romana Labrosse, foreword by Jean-Claude Marcadé, Rodovid Press, 2010. 408 pp. Illustrations. Endnotes. Selected Bibliography. Appendix. Index. \$75.00, cloth.

This monograph was originally published in the Ukrainian language in 2010 (as *Ukrains'ki mysttsi Paryzha: 1900-1939* [*Ukrainian Artists in Paris: 1900-1939*], incorporating a text written in 2008). More recently, both an English-language translation (2010; reviewed here) and a French-language translation (*Les artistes ukrainiens à Paris: 1900-1939*; 2012) were produced. This richly illustrated, folio-size publication, written by Vita Susak, is an important contribution to the history of European art and the history of the School of Paris; Susak is the curator of the Department of European Art of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries at the B. H. Voznyts'kyi Lviv National Art Gallery. The book, according to its table of contents, contains an introduction (by Lidia Lykhach of Rodovid Press) and a foreword by Jean-Claude Marcadé; four chapters with several subchapters each; a separate section with colour illustrations; and an appendix, which includes a dictionary of Ukrainian artists in Paris and lists of events in the Ukrainian community. However, some items, including several reprinted articles from the 1930s, are awkwardly missing from my copy of the book (pages 397-404).

The School of Paris designates a group of French and émigré artists who worked in Paris from 1900 to the 1950s. The word *school* in this case does not refer to a formal institution or training program, nor does it denote a single art movement. The School of Paris is an indication of the artistic experimentation and unique bohemian atmosphere that were distinctive features of Parisian art life in the first half of the twentieth century. Susak's desired mission is to showcase the Ukrainian contribution to the School of Paris—to introduce the main artists of Ukrainian origin, to tell the stories of their lives, and to discuss their creative work. The main heroes of her narrative are Mykhailo Boichuk, Abraham Manevich, Alexander Archipenko, Sonia Lewitska, Sonia Delaunay, Vladimir Baranoff-Rossine, Chana Orloff, Alexis Gritchenko (Oleksa Hryshchenko), Vasyl Khmeluk, Michel Andreenko, Ivan Babiy, Mykola Hlushchenko, and Klyment Red'ko; their lives and oeuvres are covered in separate biographic essays. The author includes subchapters devoted to the Ukrainian artists of Jewish origin, the Ukrainian students of the Académie Moderne, and artistic groups of the 1920s and 1930s.

To fulfill her ambitious goal, Susak employs a chronological approach and meticulously describes the biographies of her selection of artists,

mentioning their main artistic achievements, exhibitions, and publications. Her approach, however, has noticeable shortcomings. For instance, throughout the text, the author tends to bring to the reader's attention details of the artists' lives that are superfluous to an analysis of their artistic achievements. This certainly makes the book's narrative more poetic, but this is not always suitable for an academic edition. Moreover, some subchapters are far too short to be considered essays. In addition, the author frequently incorporates long quotes from artists' letters or from their memoirs (often also poetic in nature) and from essays about them, which in many cases do not assert any essential information in the absence of further analysis or discussion. Such discussion, however, is rarely provided, leaving readers with the task of working through these citations on their own. Susak primarily emphasizes the artists' biographies and personal lives. Her secondary focus is on their works within the larger context of various art movements and the trends that they represent. However, the discussion of cross-fertilization and collaboration with other artists outside of the Ukrainian community is omitted, which detracts from the monograph as the book then lacks strong evidence of the direct impact of the Ukrainian artists on the School of Paris. In fact, many of the artists that Susak describes were involved in various art movements and experiments especially characteristic of the School of Paris. A detailed analysis of their unique contribution to these movements, including a comparison of their contributions to those from non-Ukrainian communities, would be especially expected and appreciated.

Additionally, a thematic structure for the monograph would make it much more usable for undergraduate and graduate teaching. Accordingly, the book would gain a better readership if it could offer, for example, an essay on women artists in the School of Paris and their oeuvres that would reflect on the artists' access to education and their position in the Ukrainian community. Some prominent women artists are discussed; however, in the absence of specific accounts of women's art and world view, it, thus, remains unclear what Susak means when she speaks of "'feminine'" subjects (159); this is in contrast with her discussion of relations between male artists and "'big' themes" (127). Another obvious subject that recurs throughout the book—one that could successfully be delivered in a separate essay—pertains to the art market, exhibition venues, and art patronage. Also, the author could have examined figurative art and the move toward abstraction by analyzing these tendencies through Ukrainian painting and sculpture in Paris. This would have assisted in creating a larger context and answering the essential questions, What exactly was behind these tendencies, and why did they concur? And such a discussion would have helped avoid unwarranted claims about the "conservatism" of figurative art versus the "progressive" nature of abstraction and other radical movements (116).

The target audience for this volume remains unclear. Art historians with an academic background would appreciate a thematic approach, detailed analyses of art works, and a comparison of those works to the iconic art of the School of Paris. At the same time, the general reader would benefit from a detailed explanation of the terms (or slang) that Susak uses and the various art movements and trends mentioned in the book (for example, primitivism, simultanism, Dadaism, cubism, neoclassicism, Electro-Organism, *montparno*, Samoyed, and so on). And, indeed, both a thematic approach and explanations of terms are expected for a textbook. Unfortunately, none of this is presented in the volume. Also, a thorough proofreading would have helped avoid unnecessary errors (for example, the concluding statement is missing on page 123). Improvements could be made by identifying some of the people in the photographs (for example, on pages 146 and 162) and providing the approximate dates for a number of the images (for example, for illustrations 1, 2, 3, 18, 19, 24, 43, 75, 97, 110, 111, and so on); all of this would make this book easier to read and to navigate.

Setting these criticisms aside, the monograph under review is a thought-provoking depiction of the lesser-known aspects of the School of Paris. It can serve as a reference source for further research and analysis, and it will be useful reading for those who are interested in the history of the School of Paris or the history of Ukrainian émigré artists.

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Works Cited

- Susak, Vita. *Les artistes ukrainiens à Paris: 1900-1939* [*Ukrainian Artists in Paris: 1900-1939*]. Éditions Rodovid, 2012.
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