

# The Method of Socialist Realism in International Relations: The Cases of Ukrainian and Ethiopian Art Education

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To better implement the method of Socialist Realism, which was adopted as the official artistic standard by the Ethiopian regime established in 1974, young professionals received scholarships to study in socialist countries. This paper analyzes Soviet-Ethiopian international relations through the specific case of the Kyiv State Art Institute that hosted foreign students sent by referral from Moscow. By tracing the lives and studies of Ethiopian students in Kyiv during the 1980s, the article draws institutional and aesthetical parallels between the Ethiopian and Ukrainian art schools operating under the policy of Socialist Realism and questions the long-term consequences for the cultural development of both countries.

*Keywords:* Socialist Realism, art education, Ethiopian students, Kyiv State Art Institute, Fine Arts School of Addis Ababa, 1980s art.

The cultural history of the seventeen-year rule of the Derg—an autocratic regime that seized power in Ethiopia in 1974—is marked by the introduction of Socialist Realism. Following the guidelines of this method developed in the Soviet Union, Ethiopian authorities replicated its aesthetics and institutional structure. The educational sphere was called upon to help to create a new culture: the art school was reformed, and students were involved in the new type of art production. To gain a better understanding of the model to be replicated, students were sent to study in socialist countries. Among the host institutions was the Kyiv State Art Institute (hereinafter referred to as KSAI), where seventeen Ethiopian students studied during the 1980s.<sup>1</sup>

The scholar of Ethiopian modernity Elizabeth Wolde Giorgis<sup>2</sup> has made a profound contribution to the elucidation of the cultural development and art production of the time. However, little attention has been paid to the functioning of the scholarships granted to young Ethiopian artists for six years of training in the Soviet Union and to their long-term consequences. In this regard, the study by Kate Cowcher is interesting.<sup>3</sup> In a broad socio-political context, she traces the education and subsequent careers of the first two artists who came from Ethiopia to the leading art schools of the USSR: the Surikov Academy in Moscow and the Repin Academy in Leningrad.

Peripheral Soviet art schools, such as the Benkov Republican College of Art in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, have come into view in the work of Polly Savage, who discusses the specific experience of Mozambican art students trapped in the canonical and hierarchical Soviet pedagogical system. This article appears among other investigations into the presence of foreign art students in the USSR and Eastern Europe in the recently published special issue of *Art History* titled *Red Networks: Postwar Art Exchange*.<sup>4</sup> In both

- 1 There were five students from Ethiopia at KSAI who studied in the early 1990s and who are not included in this study. Archive of the National Academy of Fine Art and Architecture (NAFAA), Kyiv.
- 2 Elizabeth W. Giorgis, *Ethiopian Modernism: A Subaltern Perspective* (PhD diss., Cornell University, 2010); and Giorgis, *Modernist Art in Ethiopia* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2019).
- 3 Kate Cowcher, "From Pushkin to Perestroika: Art and the Search for an Ethiopian October," in *Red Africa: Affective Communities and the Cold War*, ed. Mark Nash (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2016), 53–67.
- 4 Polly Savage, "'The New Life': Mozambican Art Students in the USSR, and the Aesthetic Epistemologies of Anti-Colonial Solidarity," *Art History* 45, no. 5 (November 2022): 1078–100.

academic and artistic fields, and in the context of decolonial discourses, interest in various aspects of international relations in the Socialist bloc is growing, evidenced by the emergence of complex exhibition and research projects. In Poland, for example, the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw has published several books related to the Cold War history of art. One volume focuses on student exchanges between the Global South and the Polish People's Republic,<sup>5</sup> and includes a fact-rich text on socialist scholarship programs by Constantin Katsakioris.<sup>6</sup> The second volume addresses the global aspirations of Socialist Realism and contains another text by Kate Cowcher that is relevant for our study, as it discusses the genealogy of figurative art in Africa and Ethiopia's engagement with Socialist Realism.<sup>7</sup> In Germany, to take another example, the art of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) is being reassessed in relation to the country's foreign policy that fostered cultural encounters around the world. One such project<sup>8</sup> is the museum exhibition *Re-Connect. Art and Conflict in Brotherland* at the MdbK, Leipzig, accompanied by a substantial catalogue that includes a text on foreign students at the Academy of Fine Arts in Leipzig.<sup>9</sup>

The background of international official relations differed from state to state. While international agreements were crucial for the GDR in terms of securing recognition of the republic, the interest of the Soviet Union as the center of political decision-making was global. The basic Soviet approach to Africa since the late 1960s was to present itself as a model for newly independent states to follow. From 1975, however, it shifted toward

- 5 Magda Lipska and Monika Talarczyk, eds., *Hope Is of a Different Color: From the Global South to the Lodz Film School* (Warsaw: Museum of Modern Art – University of Chicago Press, 2021).
- 6 Constantin Katsakioris, "Effective Solidarity with the Postcolonial World: Cold War Educational Assistance from the Socialist Countries," in *Hope Is of a Different Color: From the Global South to the Lodz Film School*, ed. Magda Lipska and Monika Talarczyk (Warsaw: Museum of Modern Art – University of Chicago Press, 2021), 59–77.
- 7 Kate Cowcher, "All That Glitters Is Not Gold: Genealogies of Realism in Ethiopia and Beyond," in *Was Socialist Realism Global? Modernism, Soc-Modernism, Socially Engaged Figuration*, eds. Magda Lipska and Piotr Ślōdkowski (Warsaw: Museum of Modern Art – University of Chicago Press, 2023), 215–30.
- 8 See *Echoes of the Brother Countries* (HKW, Berlin, 2024); and *Revolutionary Romances? Global Art Histories in the GDR* (Albertinum, Dresden, 2024).
- 9 Sithara Weeratunga and Marcus Andrew Hurrting, eds., *Re-Connect. Art and Conflict in Brotherland* (Munich: Hirmer, 2023).

interventionist policies. In the Cold War struggle for world dominance and access to resources, the Soviet Union pursued its goals through proxy engagements and spheres of influence. Among African countries such as Angola, Zambia, and Mozambique, Ethiopia was a key site of Soviet military presence—a primary means of pursuing objectives in conflict situations.<sup>10</sup>

Even in the early Soviet period of global ideological struggle, there was a lack of interest among Soviet Stalinist leaders in exporting their country's art internationally, Piotrowski argues,<sup>11</sup> also referring to Antoine Baudin's observation<sup>12</sup> of a limited foreign policy in the field of fine arts, in contrast to literature, politics and ideology. Scholars agree that the international expansion of Socialist Realism was primarily discursive. As such, art occupied a different position: it remained confined within the rigid boundaries of what was permitted and regulated within the Soviet Union.

However, let us return to our case. Immediately after the diplomatic agreement between the Derg and the Soviet government was signed in 1978, thousands of experts from socialist countries arrived in Ethiopia, while, in the opposite direction, the necessary personnel were sent for training.<sup>13</sup> It was then that the first Ethiopian students—Teklu Berhane, Kidane Belay, Demissie Shiferaw, and Beyenech Johannes<sup>14</sup>—were sent to study art at the Kyiv Art Institute by referral from the USSR Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialized Education. They arrived in 1979 for a year-long Russian language course and began their art studies in 1980. This is how Kyiv became involved: Soviet republics were assigned the role of servicing Moscow's obligations within the specific framework of new Socialist alliances.<sup>15</sup>

10 On Soviet interests and objectives in Africa, see John Barratt, "The Soviet Union and Southern Africa," South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA), May 1, 1981. Accessed December 9, 2024, <https://africaportal.org/publication/the-soviet-union-and-southern-africa/>

11 Piotr Piotrowski, "Czy realizm socjalistyczny był globalny?" [Was Socialist Realism Global?], in *Globalne ujęcie sztuki Europy Wschodniej* (Poznan: Rebis, 2018), 87–106.

12 Antoine Baudin, "Why Is Soviet Painting Hidden from Us? Zhdanov Art and Its International Relations and Fallout, 1947–1953," in *Socialist Realism without Shores*, ed. Thomas Lahusen and Evgeny Dobrenko (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997).

13 Odd Arne Westad, "The Prospects of Socialism: Ethiopia and the Horn," in *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 279–80.

14 According to the records at the Archive of the NAFAA, Kyiv.

15 The Ukrainian SSR was not an independent actor in global politics. For a discussion of the contradiction between the official doctrine of the Ukrainian SSR as a sovereign state and

The implementation of Moscow-centered international policies and commitments did not diminish the responsibilities of the peripheral regions in the field of art. The republics were tasked with developing the multinational face of international Socialist Realism, primarily through contacts enclosed within the USSR borders. In several articles dedicated to the internationalist character of Soviet Art published in 1974 in *Obrazotvorche Mystetstvo* (Fine Art), the main art magazine of the Ukrainian Socialist Republic, there is little mention of countries outside the Soviet Union. It was only during the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the USSR that all republics were awarded the Order of Friendship of Peoples, a symbol of “high internationalism.”<sup>16</sup>

The resolution of the national question in the field of art was recognized as one of the brilliant achievements of the socialist system and was encapsulated in the well-known formula of art being “socialist in content and national in form.” Among these achievements was the emergence of national schools of easel painting and sculpture in countries whose art had previously been limited to decorative and applied forms, such as Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Bashkiria, and the Tatar ASSR, among others.<sup>17</sup> In fact, Socialist Realism acquired national characteristics by incorporating the folk features of each republic into a standardized realist form, transmitted through the system of art education.<sup>18</sup> In the vision

political reality, see Ivan L. Rudnytsky, “The Soviet Ukraine in Historical Perspective,” *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue Canadienne Des Slavistes* 14, no. 2 (1972): 238, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40866431>.

- 16 Tair Salakhov, “Internatsionalists’kyi kharakter radians’koho mystetstva” [The Internationalist Character of Soviet Art], *Obrazotvorche mystetstvo*, no. 4 (Kyiv: Mystetstvo, liutyi 1974): 2–3.
- 17 See the introductory text to the inauguration publication of the USSR Academy of Arts, authored by its first president (1947–1957), Aleksandr Gerasimov—one of the leading artists of Socialist Realism. Aleksandr Gerasimov, “Sovetskoe izobrazitel’noe iskusstvo i zadachi Akademii khudozhestv SSSR” [Soviet Fine Arts and the Tasks of the USSR Academy of Arts], in *Akademiia khudozhestv SSSR. Pervaia i vtoraiia sessii. Doklady, preniia i postanovleniia* (Moskva: Izdatel’stvo Akademii khudozhestv SSSR, 1949), 17.
- 18 Folk traditions were treated as an enrichment of the realist image, but formal stylizations were not allowed. See, for example, Svetlana Chervonnaia, “Avtonomnaia respublika: gorizonty iskusstva, tvorcheskiiye problemy” [Autonomous Republic: Horizons of Art, Creative Problems], in *Trudy Akademii khudozhestv SSSR*, vyp. 2 (Moskva: Izobrazitel’noe iskusstvo, 1984), 39–41.

of the ideologists of Socialist Realism, as proclaimed at the first session of the USSR Academy of Arts, a research institution overseeing all forms of artistic education, Russian art of the Soviet era was at the forefront of the development and flourishing of the multinational Art of the Peoples of the USSR.<sup>19</sup> Overall, Socialist Realism was seen as the heir and continuer of the traditions of realistic art of the past, primarily 19th-century Russian Realism, with its critical character shifted toward affirmation.

While Ukraine had already been practicing the method of Socialist Realism since its announcement in 1932,<sup>20</sup> Ethiopia—as the last Marxist-Leninist state of the 20th century—was only just becoming acquainted with its specifics. This article offers a specific perspective on international relations in the last decades of the Soviet Union between countries subject to its policies. Often overshadowed by the metropolis of Moscow, the art of the republics of the socialist camp—including Ukraine—has received insufficient attention in academic research. Examining Ethiopian-Soviet cultural relations from the standpoint of the Ukrainian Socialist Republic can add complexity to the history of the period.

The aim of this article is to clarify the role of the educational field as an efficient tool for shaping the cultural fabric of the state—a role assigned to art schools under Socialist Realism. Before discussing the cultural infrastructure and production of Socialist Realism, however, there will be first revisit of some historical prerequisites for its implementation and present key facts about Ethiopian students in Kyiv.

#### Foreign students in Kyiv: meeting the conditions

Although students from more than 30 countries studied at what was then the Soviet Ukrainian Kyiv State Art Institute, almost nothing remains of their presence in its official history. The final diploma works that left an artistic trace were predominantly taken by foreign students when they departed from Kyiv. In the 1970s and 1980s—the period covered by this research—the

19 On the primacy of Russian culture as a core principle of Soviet nationalities policy after 1932, see Terry Martin, “The Friendship of the Peoples,” in *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 432–46.

20 Central Committee of the Communist Party, “On the Restructuring of Literary and Artistic Organizations,” resolution, 1932.

largest numbers of students came to Kyiv from Vietnam, Mongolia, Cuba, and Ethiopia. Much of the information about them is preserved through the memories of their fellow students and contemporaries who lived together in dormitories or met during workshops and practice sessions at the institute's creative bases.<sup>21</sup> What still remains within the institute's archives are thick folders of official documents, a source to learn about foreign students staying and studying in Kyiv, their schedules, and previous education.<sup>22</sup>

Students studying on the assignment from Moscow were admitted in Kyiv without an entrance exam<sup>23</sup> and received generous support in the form of a scholarship and social benefits. The monthly stipend was 80–90 rubles—twice as much as domestic students received. As foreign students did not pay for tuition and dormitory accommodation, this amount was more than enough for living expenses. Moreover, upon arrival, they were provided with clothing worth approximately three stipends and enjoyed other privileges such as a tax-free parcel allowance (two parcels per year) and a separate amount of 100 rubles allocated for summer holidays.<sup>24</sup>

Before enrollment, all foreign students at KSAI were required to complete a year-long preparatory language course at one of Kyiv's universities. The very first art students from Socialist Ethiopia granted study places at Soviet art institutes in Moscow and Leningrad received their Russian language training in Donetsk, Ukraine, in 1978.<sup>25</sup> While students sent to the GDR took German language courses,<sup>26</sup> those sent to study in the USSR republics were required to learn only Russian.

The course also included classes in geography, literature, history, and methods of teaching Russian as a foreign language.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore,

21 The article is based on the memoirs of Nataliia Kariyeva-Hotie, Pavlo Kerestey, Anatoliy Tverdy, and Tamara Tsaranenko, personal communication, March 2024.

22 Archive of the NAFAA.

23 The admission documents to KSAI contain the note "admitted under the state program." Archive of the NAFAA.

24 Based on the records of Ethiopian students who studied in the 1980s. Archive of the NAFAA.

25 Cowcher, "From Pushkin to Perestroika," 59.

26 On the Herder Institute in Leipzig, see Jule Lagoda and Kerstin Schankweiler, "In the Archive of the Global GDR: Testimonials to Transnational Art Histories," in *Re-Connect. Art and Conflict in Brotherland*, ed. Weeratunga Sithara and Marcus Andrew Hurrting (München: Hirmer, 2023), 31.

27 The certificate granted foreign students the right to teach Russian at the facultative level.

Russian language courses continued throughout the subsequent six years of study at the art institute, despite the complete absence of other languages in the curriculum. In terms of hours, Russian was surpassed only by the main disciplines such as painting, drawing, or sculpture.<sup>28</sup>

It was the Russian language that undoubtedly enabled students to access information about art circulating throughout the Soviet Union. Professional literature, including works on world history and Soviet art, was published in Russian. It was conceived as the language of the scientific field, contrasted with Ukrainian, which was represented as rural. This distinction is evident: at the Art History and Theory department, KSAI qualification works had to be written in Russian.

Restrictions on access to banned information in the 1980s had already become “softer”<sup>29</sup> due to the onset of political reforms of the Perestroika period following Leonid Brezhnev’s death in 1982. Nevertheless, in the Ukrainian SSR there remained a persistent lack of access to professional literature, a situation that began in 1930 with the introduction of Socialist Realism,<sup>30</sup> accompanied by severe repressions aimed at eliminating or altering knowledge.<sup>31</sup> This hunger for knowledge resulted in circulation

28 From the qualification records of Ethiopian students who studied in the 1980s. Archive of KSAI.

29 As an example, the Special Secret Fund of the State Ukrainian Museum in Kyiv (now the National Art Museum of Ukraine, NAMU) housed artworks by so-called “public enemies” (artists accused of formalism and nationalism) that were collected from various Ukrainian museums between 1937 and 1939 and were intended for destruction. Until 1987, the collection remained entirely inaccessible except to its Head. It was only opened to researchers after the collapse of the Soviet Union. See Yuliia Lytvynets, ed., *Spetsfond 1937–1939: z koleksii Natsional'noho khudozhn'oho muzeiu Ukraïny* [Special Fund 1937–1939: From the Collection of the National Art Museum of Ukraine] (Kyiv: NHMU – Feniks, 2016).

30 From the 1930s memoirs of Sergii Giliarov, then professor of Art History at the Kyiv Art Institute: “Publications of the last decade (even the last 18 years) almost never reach us. We are not aware of what is happening in our discipline, not even regarding bibliography, because we receive almost no art magazines, none at all in the last two years.” Cited in Oleksandr Bezruchko, *Ukrains'ki kinematohrafisty, pedahohy: vidnovleni storinky zhyttia* [Ukrainian Cinematographers, Teachers: Recovered Pages of Life] (Kyiv: KyMU, 2013), 54.

31 Myroslav Shkandrij, “Subverting Leviathan. The Struggle for Discursive Control in the Soviet Union,” in *Russia and Ukraine: Literature and the Discourse of Empire from Napoleon to Postcolonial Times* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001): 213–23. More on political repression, see Myroslav Shkandrij and Olga Bertelsen, “The Soviet Regime's National Operations in Ukraine, 1929–1934,” *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue Canadienne Des Slavistes* 55, no. 3/4 (2013): 417–47.

from the periphery to the center and trade hubs. Art history lecturers from KSAI traveled to the Hermitage Library in Leningrad, as it was one of the few places offering access to a wide range of literature.<sup>32</sup> In Kyiv, only one bookstore, titled *Friendship*, offered foreign literature, though it was marked by significant shortages. Attractive sources for art students in Kyiv included periodicals from socialist republics such as Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which the institute's library received monthly. The majority of these focused on photography or architecture—for example, *Project* from the Czechoslovak Republic. The *Bildende Kunst* magazine from the GDR, which regularly reported on current art events abroad, was particularly enticing in terms of information.

Ethiopian students who came to Kyiv had a broader view of artistic processes than their local counterparts, as they were exposed to a wide range of artistic practices: some had studied at the Fine Arts School of Addis Ababa (now Ale School of Fine Arts and Design) even before the coup d'état in 1974 and the 1976 reform of the school, which aligned it with the tenets of Socialist Realism. The school's professors maintained close ties with European art centers on both sides of the Iron Curtain. The increasing number of art school graduates contributed to the rise of modernist art in Ethiopia during the 1960s and early 1970s,<sup>33</sup> although in the 1970s, artists also remained engaged in figurative expression.<sup>34</sup> Cultural organizations such as the Alliance Française, the Italian Cultural Institute, and the Deutsches Kultur-Institut were active with their programs, maintaining cultural ties and channels that undoubtedly supported young Ethiopian artists during their travels to capitalist countries while studying in the USSR. All Ethiopian students arriving in Kyiv were proficient in English,<sup>35</sup> a skill less common among Ukrainian students.

Most of the documents stored in the personal folders of Ethiopian students are applications for travel permits.<sup>36</sup> The KSAI dormitory, where

32 Liudmyla Miliiaeva, "Z mynuloho (Strokati notatky)" [From the Past (Colorful Notes)], *Ukrainska akademiia mystetstva*, Spetsialnyi vypusk do 50-richchia fakultetu teorii ta istorii mystetstva NAOMA (Kyiv, 2010): 56–7.

33 Shiferaw, "A Modernising State and the Emergence of Modernist Arts in Ethiopia," 41.

34 Cowcher, "All That Glitters is Not Gold: Genealogies of Realism in Ethiopia and Beyond," 218–24.

35 From the records of Ethiopian students. Archive of the NAFAA.

36 Archive of the NAFAA.

all foreign students lived alongside Ukrainian peers, was within walking distance of the institute. Foreign students were subject to regulations restricting changes of residence and movement.<sup>37</sup> Permission was required even for internal Soviet trips—for example, training practices in Sedniev in the Chernihiv region bordering the Kyiv region, visits to major cities such as Kharkiv, or trips to more distant socialist republic centers such as Moscow for visa extensions or museum visits.<sup>38</sup> However, the majority of travel requests concerned longer journeys for family visits and holidays abroad, including destinations in East and West Germany, the USA, Austria, and Italy. These trips were mostly very short, lasting 2–5 days, but occurred quite frequently—3–4 times per year.<sup>39</sup> The broad geographic scope of permitted travel was agreed upon by the countries whose consulates issued the regulation—and notably, the Office of Education and Culture of the Embassy of Socialist Ethiopia to the USSR raised no objections to students traveling internationally. This level of freedom was not extended to students from Cuba, who were not allowed to travel outside the Soviet Union, nor to Soviet-Ukrainian students, who had no possibility of crossing borders. For most Soviet citizens, most of whom lived in rural areas and had not even been issued internal passports until the comprehensive passporting campaign began in 1976, travel was largely impossible.<sup>40</sup>

Some countries of the Socialist Bloc offered considerably more freedom and opportunities for young artists, especially when contrasted with the strict cultural infrastructure under Soviet rule. A notable example is the exhibition practice in the GDR, where the Centre for Art Exhibitions (established in 1973) organized various exhibitions with an international focus showcasing contemporary art. Just one year after signing the cultural agreement with the Socialist People's Republic of Ethiopia in 1977, it staged an exhibition that would have been unimaginable in Ukraine at the time: *Young Art from Ethiopia* (Junge Kunst aus Äthiopien), featuring 65

37 See documents in personal folders of foreign students. Archive of the NAFAA.

38 See numerous records with visit requests. Archive of the NAFAA.

39 See, for example, records in the personal folder of Tesfaye Ergete Tassema, including details of his travels to Denmark, West Germany, and Italy. Archive of the NAFAA.

40 For more on the passporting system in the USSR see Mark Garcelon, "5. Colonizing the Subject: The Genealogy and Legacy of the Soviet Internal Passport," in *Documenting Individual Identity: The Development of State Practices in the Modern World*, edited by Jane Caplan and John Torpey (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 83–100.

works by three contemporary Ethiopian artists.<sup>41</sup> These artists were of the same generation as the Ethiopians studying in Kyiv during the 1980s.

In Ukraine, exhibition policy was governed by the Directorate of Art Exhibitions, established in 1935 during the monopolization and ideologization of art processes by the state as a “center for the promotion of art among a people”<sup>42</sup>—with “art” understood as Socialist Realism. Exhibited works, therefore, had to comply with its core principles, which posed challenges for contemporary Ethiopian art, which was either marked by a modern mode of expression or lacked sufficient realistic skill. Although the specific reasons remain undocumented, it is clear that African and Latin American countries were not represented in the exhibition program of the Kyiv State Art Museum<sup>43</sup> at that time. The international dimension was largely limited to showcasing works from Soviet republics and close socialist allies.

It is no surprise that among the preferred destinations for Ethiopian artists applying for scholarships were the GDR, the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, and the Socialist Republics of Romania and Bulgaria, with the USSR not taking precedence.<sup>44</sup> Bekele Mekonnen, a recent professor at the Fine Arts School of Addis Ababa who studied in Moscow in the late 1980s, recalled that his invitation to study in the USSR was postponed for four years because he initially sought opportunities in other European countries.<sup>45</sup> Ultimately, his acceptance of the Soviet scholarship was driven more by a desire to leave Ethiopia, as the Derg regime began recruiting young students into the army.<sup>46</sup>

What motivated students to study in the USSR if not primarily to avoid military obligations, benefit economically, and gain solid academic proficiency? For those who did not plan to emigrate, the latter was particularly valuable. However, as recalled by their Kyiv peers,<sup>47</sup> many students

41 The exhibition was held in the exhibition pavilion on Friedrichstraße, Berlin (East). See Lagoda and Schankweiler, “In the Archive of the Global GDR,” 29.

42 Central State Archive–Museum of Literature and Arts of Ukraine, Fund No. 665, description, 1.

43 Now known as the National Art Museum of Ukraine.

44 From the records of Ethiopian students. Archive of the NAFAA.

45 In the interview, he also mentioned public suspicions regarding Russia’s interest in Ethiopia. See Woubshet, “An Interview with Bekele Mekonnen,” 226.

46 Bekele Mekonnen studied at the Moscow State Art Institute from 1987 to 1993.

47 Personal communication, March 2024.

indeed considered emigration. Evidence shows that some Ethiopian students returned home after completing their Soviet art education and took up teaching positions at their Alma Mater.<sup>48</sup>

#### The model to copy: Socialist Realist institutionalism

Before arriving in Kyiv, Ethiopian students had already graduated from the Fine Arts School of Addis Ababa, completing a five-year program between 1974 and 1981. Almost all of them had prior teaching experience,<sup>49</sup> meaning they were well-prepared artists by the time they began their studies abroad. This also applies to those who went to study in the GDR,<sup>50</sup> indicating a general pattern. The opportunity to study abroad was mainly extended to those whose artistic practice was in line with the aesthetic views of the Derg regime or who had demonstrated notable achievements.<sup>51</sup>

Two artists stand out as examples of this professional background in Ethiopia before studying in Kyiv: Demissie Shiferaw and Kidane Belay. They are mentioned in Giorgis's thorough research as teammates of Afework Tekle, who together with seven other artists, sculptors, and painters completed a state commission for a mural at the Yegegnoch Amba (Center for the Heroes) in 1977.<sup>52</sup> Later, between 1980 and 1985, Demissie Shiferaw studied the battle genre of painting under professor Victor Shatalin in Kyiv, while Kidane Belay pursued sculpture under the guidance of Vasyl Borodai—one of the most honored Soviet Ukrainian sculptors, renowned for his public monuments. Belay's diploma work was titled *Partisan. After the Victory*.<sup>53</sup>

There was a notable shortage of sculptors skilled in monumental plastic arts in Ethiopia.<sup>54</sup> Among the active artists filling this gap was Tadesse Mamecha, whose sculpture *Nikate an Afar* is a replica of his 1971 graduation work at the Leningrad Art Academy, completed before the

48 Ayele Assefa, who studied in Kyiv from 1983 to 1989, is currently a lecturer at the Ale School of Fine Arts and Design. His diploma painting titled *Menelek II* (Emperor of Ethiopia, 1844–1913) was defended under the supervision of Professor Oleksandr Lopukhov, rector of KSAI from 1973 to 1985. Archive of the NAFAA.

49 From the records of Ethiopian students. Archive of the NAFAA.

50 Blume, "Foreign Students at the Academy of Fine Arts Leipzig," 57.

51 See examples of Eshetu Tiruneh and Tadesse Mesfin in Cowcher, "From Pushkin to Pere-stroika," 58.

52 Giorgis, *Modernist Art in Ethiopia*, 210–11.

53 From the records of Demissie Shiferaw and Kidane Belay. Archive of the NAFAA.

54 Ibid., 221.

Ethiopian revolution.<sup>55</sup> This illustrates how artists who studied in the Soviet Union found professional opportunities aligned with the state policy of the Derg regime.

At the same time, older artists such as the above-mentioned modernist Afework Tekle or Abdurahman Sheriff remained culturally active, adapting their practices to meet state demands.<sup>56</sup> They were incentivized through a system of rewards and privileges granted by state commissions, which they considered sufficient compensation for their professional endeavors.<sup>57</sup> A core principle of the functioning of Socialist Realism was that state support was the sole form of patronage available, thus eliminating any aesthetic choices for artists working within the system.

The Derg regime demanded artists and sculptors to create monumental propaganda promoting their so-called socialist values through recognizable revolutionary images borrowed from the Russian Revolution. A state order mandated the production of rhetorical propaganda posters and billboards accompanying public displays of power.<sup>58</sup> The visual language was initially inspired by illustrations found in a Soviet book housed in the Fine Arts School of Addis Ababa Library.<sup>59</sup> Due to the high demand for new works and limited sources of inspiration,<sup>60</sup> it became essential to cultivate a generation of artists committed to the new aesthetics.

Since the introduction of Socialist Realism by the Derg, all its institutional norms were established, bringing cultural life under strict state control. Following the Soviet model of art education, the Fine Arts School of Addis Ababa—originally founded in the late 1950s as a modern art academy grounded in Western perspectives<sup>61</sup>—was transferred from the

55 Ibid.

56 Afework Tekle became highly honored by the state, recipient of the International Gold Mercury Award personally presented by Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam, and awarded the highest order of Hero of Peace and Friendship. He was the artist who held a solo exhibition in 1980 at museums in the Soviet Union, both in Moscow and Leningrad. See Giorgis, *Modernist Art in Ethiopia*, 212.

57 Giorgis, *Ethiopian Modernism: A Subaltern Perspective*, 217.

58 Ibid., 201–2.

59 Probably donated by Soviet cultural institutions before the revolution. See Cowcher, “From Pushkin to Perestroika,” 57.

60 In library copies of books from the 1950s and 1960s, graphic art from socialist countries bears marks of heavy use. Ibid.

61 See the formation of the Fine Art School in Giorgis, *Modernist Art in Ethiopia*, 74–9.

Ministry of Education to the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Culture, thereby formalizing the implementation of the new cultural model. Structurally, the Fine Arts School was divided into three departments: painting, sculpture, and graphics, with curricula revised to align with the new ideology, abandoning earlier European modernism approaches.<sup>62</sup> The local Union of Artists—the United Ethiopian Artists Association—was restructured in 1986 according to Soviet discourse, aimed at uniting “all dispersed artists before the revolution under the banner of unity.”<sup>63</sup> This reflected the Soviet Union’s strategy of monopolizing and standardizing art processes at all levels, from education to production, representation, and preservation. Official collections, such as those housed in the National Museum of Ethiopia, mainly echoed the official ideology of the state.<sup>64</sup> Exhibitions organized by the state showcased works similar in style to graduation pieces, mainly academic-style paintings on canvas. These artworks, alongside propaganda posters depicting workers, peasants, and iconic revolutionary figures, often accompanied by slogans like *Art for Peace* and symbols such as the hammer and sickle, are preserved in the Archive of the Fine Arts School of Addis Ababa.<sup>65</sup> With many older artists having already left the country, the art scene increasingly consisted of young graduates from the Fine Arts School.<sup>66</sup> Thus, the visual culture of that period emerged within the school’s walls, functioning as a laboratory or factory for producing the art characteristic of that era.<sup>67</sup>

The Fine Arts School of Addis Ababa was originally founded as a laboratory for Western art practices, though it still accommodated a variety of artistic approaches. Established during Emperor Haile Selassie’s modernization efforts, the school’s teaching staff was European, with the first Ethiopian professor joining only five years later, in 1963. Thus, this process reflected a non-colonial, self-directed engagement with Western culture. The European academic model of artistic education—specifically the Paris

62 Giorgis, *Ethiopian Modernism: A Subaltern Perspective*, 191.

63 Ibid., 217.

64 Ibid., 186.

65 Giorgis, *Ethiopian Modernism: A Subaltern Perspective*, 202–3.

66 Ibid., 215–16. Skunder Boghossian, Wossene Kosrof, Achamyeleh Debela, and Tesfaye Tessema left the country. Gebre Kristos Desta left later, in 1978, during the “Red Terror.”

67 Ibid., 201.

Academy (Académie royale de peinture et sculpture, founded in 1648)—had long shaped artistic instruction in Atlantic colonies since the 18th century.<sup>68</sup> However, it reached the African continent later, in the 20th century, and was therefore more closely linked with aesthetic and pedagogical reforms influenced by avant-garde movements.<sup>69</sup> While the academic institutional structure, characterized by discipline and hierarchical organization, was increasingly questioned worldwide, the Soviet Union embraced it as a proper model for implementing Socialist Realism.<sup>70</sup> The Kyiv Art Institut became also integrated into this very model.

#### Place of arrival: The Kyiv Art Institute as a distributor of Socialist Realism

The Art Institute in Kyiv was established during the brief period of uplift following Ukrainian independence, achieved through the revolution of 1917. It was founded as a modern Ukrainian art academy, as a principal opposition to the Russian Empire's academic art education. This first higher art education institution in Ukraine was run entirely by local artists. As a living, responsive organism, it reflected the political and social circumstances of the time, embracing a variety of pedagogical approaches. During the 1920s, it became a site of avant-garde pedagogical experimentation and revolutionary art production, much of it motivated from below. The school expressed radical positions, such as dismissing all kinds of easel painting formats in favor of monumental forms, unless these were redefined through rapid cultural transformations aligned with Social Realism.<sup>71</sup> This process was

68 For example, the Academy of San Carlos was founded in 1781 in Mexico City, the capital of the Spanish colony.

69 Jean-Charles Geslot, "Artistic Education and Artist Training," accessed December 9, 2024, <https://transatlantic-cultures.org/en/catalog/education-artistique-et-formation-des-artistes-europe-amerique-afrique-xviie-xxe-siecles>.

70 The Academy of Arts of the USSR was considered the heir of the Russian Academy of Arts founded in 1757, and the guardian of the pedagogical system, despite modernist tendencies. See, for example, Viktor Vanslov, "Istoricheskii put' Akademii Khudozhestv SSSR" [The Historical Path of the Academy of Arts of the USSR], in *Trudy Akademii Khudozhestv SSSR*. Vyp. 4. (Moskva: Izobrazitel'noe iskusstvo, 1987): 8–25.

71 See more about the reforms in the Kyiv Art Academy in Lada Nakonechna, "Istoriia reform Natsional'noi akademii obrazotvorchoho mystetstva ta arkhitektury" [History of Reforms of the National Academy of Fine Arts and Architecture], *Kurbasivski chytannia*, no. 12, Kyiv: NCTM im. Lesia Kurbasa (2017): 34–43.

accompanied by the Great Terror, which included arrests, imprisonments, and the physical elimination of a vibrant (both nationalist and communist) cultural sector. Among those sentenced to death in 1937 were several of the most influential professors and teachers at the Kyiv Art Institute: Mykhailo Boichuk, Sofiya Nalepinska-Boichuk, Vasyl Sedliar,<sup>72</sup> and rector Arkadii Benkovych. The teaching staff was replenished with instructors from Moscow and Leningrad, who were sent to Ukraine to help local colleagues to cope with the personnel shortages resulting from these purges. Their task was to build a new cultural infrastructure to promote Socialist Realism, guided by the newly introduced principles of partisanship and nationality, and under the banner of Russian cultural superiority.<sup>73</sup> Many aspects of the institution—educational methods, formats of art production, and the overall structure of the school—were subordinated to decisions made at the central level. The USSR Academy of Arts, successor to the All-Russian Academy since 1947, oversaw ideological direction, orientation, and the standardization of educational programs. Representatives from Kyiv participated in its annual sessions. In the process of creating a proper institutional field for Socialist Realism, vertical power relations were formed. For example, KSAI professors who had studied in Leningrad were held in particularly high regard, seen as representatives of the highest education standards. It was always emphasized as a positive factor to have any connection to Moscow and Leningrad—whether defending theses or exhibiting artworks there. This highly hierarchical structure of privileges corrupted everyone involved, thus creating a closed system of attitudes with clearly defined roles.

72 They were all representatives of the Association of Revolutionary Art of Ukraine. Their vision of the art of the future contrasted with that of the Association of Artists of Red Ukraine, which followed a realistic approach and was close to the Association of Artists of Revolutionary Russia (AkhRR).

73 For more on the principles of Socialist Realism and its education, see *Akademiiia Khudozhestv SSSR. Pervaia i vtoraiia sessii. Doklady, prieniia i postanovleniia* [Academy of Arts of the USSR. First and Second Sessions. Reports, Debates, and Resolutions] (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Khudozhestv SSSR, 1949).

74 It was formed in 1938, several years after the 1932 resolution that led to dismissal of various unions and groups. See Olena Hodenko-Nakonechna, "Natsional'na spilka khudozhnykiv Ukrainy yak nastupnytsia Spilky khudozhnykiv URSR" [The National Union of Artists of Ukraine as the Successor to the Union of Artists of the Ukrainian SSR], in *Sotsialistychnyi realizm. Zdavatisia inshym. Zoshyt No. 1*, ed. Kateryna Badianova, Lada Nakonechna, and Denys Pankratov (Kyiv: ADEF, 2017), 68–74.

The institutional hierarchy guided every young artist through the ranks of the Union of Artists.<sup>74</sup> To properly embark on this path, a student had to improve their skills during their studies and produce a diploma artwork, upon which the title of artist was awarded. It was not customary for a student's work to be exhibited outside the educational context.<sup>75</sup> Committees decided the fate of artists, beginning with their participation in Union of Artists exhibitions. The statutory All-Union exhibitions in Moscow represented the next level beyond the Republican ones, where the best artists' works were shown. This system had been in place for generations—and it was the standard that newly arrived foreign students also encountered.

When Ethiopia embarked on a socialist path, Ukraine was already immersed in a deep historical amnesia, caused by successive waves of terror, censorship, and privilege-induced corruption. The early Soviet-era discussions on cultural development and artistic diversity were soon narrowed—and ultimately replaced—by a single authorized framework regulating what shall be considered proper art and what should be treated as an enemy to its “true” development. This perceived enemy, labelled “modernism,” was initially presented as dangerous, but later, all modern forms of expression—whether formal, abstract, or expressionist—were dismissed as temporary cultural manifestations and deemed insufficiently professional.<sup>76</sup> Such self-abstinence, justified in the name of preserving high artistic values, was ideologically framed as being safeguarded and guaranteed by the academy, thereby restricting creative freedom. In her study of Mozambican art students at the Republican College of Art in Tashkent, Savage makes similar observations about self-censorship in the name of upholding cultural standards.<sup>77</sup> As a result, canons, cultural hierarchies, and politically imposed boundaries were not only accepted but also perceived as normative and necessary in the pursuit of high artistic standards, aligned with the imposed understanding of the role of art and artists.

75 The potential showcases for artworks were all connected to education, such as competitions of students' artworks or state exhibitions featuring the best student works.

76 Only the impressionist manner, which saw attempts at introduction in the post-Second World War period, was suppressed by Zhdanov's cultural politics. It was not until the late 1980s that Impressionism began to enrich the painting plane of Socialist Realism. For further reading on developments in Soviet art after the Second World War, with a focus on Ukraine, see Kateryna Badianova and Lada Nakonechna, *Spots of Modernity*, documentation of the guided tour-performance (MdbK Leipzig, 2022).

77 Savage, “‘The New Life’: Mozambican Art Students in the USSR,” 1087–8.

### Affirmative national imaginary figuration in line with Socialist Realism

Although the Kyiv Art Institute was considered one of the most important art schools in the Soviet Union, questions arose regarding the opportunities it offered to foreign students. It functioned as both a distributor of political knowledge—the only mandatory state exam was in scientific communism—and a provider of academic-type art education, facilitating engagement with the method of Socialist Realism. This was one of the main reasons that motivated the Derg to send pupils to study art in the USSR. Nevertheless, the final decade of the Soviet Union's existence was marked by Perestroika, and for Ethiopian students, their studies concluded with the acquisition of proficiency in realistic plasticity.

To thoroughly master the skills of the realist school, “people come to us from many countries of the world—Canada, Finland, Vietnam, Afghanistan, Africa”, wrote Andrii Chebykin, Rector of the Kyiv State Art Institute, in 1989.<sup>78</sup> Africa—represented by students from nine countries<sup>79</sup>—was described by the Rector as “indistinguishable,” a phrase that echoes the center's colonial rhetoric. Similarly, the catalogue of the first postwar All-Union exhibition mentions artists “from Moscow, Leningrad, and the fraternal republics.” In this framework, foreign students were perceived as transient, while professors merely fulfilled their duties in relation to them. “Has success in drawing, gravitates towards monumental plastics. Prepared to work in realistic plastic,” reads the final written assessment given by the Rector of KSAI Valentyn Borysenko to Ethiopian student Kidane Belay in 1986.<sup>80</sup>

In the 1980s Ukraine, descriptive terms within the Socialist Realism discourse—such as “true art,” “civic,” “highly artistic,” and “meaningful”—were closely and increasingly linked to national discourse. Perestroika—the late Soviet reform—was perceived by advocates of Socialist Realism in Ukraine as providing ample opportunities to deepen national ties through access to previously banned literary and historical works. According to Chebykin in 1989, the deeper the realist delves into life, the more expressive the

78 Andrii Chebykin ta Yurii Belichko, “Khudozhnii shkoli alternatyvy nemaie” [There Is No Alternative to Art School], *Obrazotvorche mystetstvo*, no. 4 (Kyiv: Mystetstvo, liipen-serpen, 1989): 2.

79 At KSAI, there were students from Seychelles, Algeria, Mozambique, Mauritius, Ghana, Burundi, Tanzania, Rwanda, and Ethiopia.

80 Personal folder of Kidane Belay. Archive of the NAFAA.

signs of national identity become, aiding to achieve a dialectical synthesis of folk and academic traditions.<sup>81</sup> This national focus was reflected in the diploma works<sup>82</sup> of Ethiopian students, such as the series of posters *Motherland* by Lulseged Lakew Tocha, defended in 1992<sup>83</sup> under the supervision of Professor Tymofii Liachuk, head of the poster art workshops at the Faculty of Graphic Arts at KSAI, or the series of easel compositions *Tales of My Land* by Kenfe Shewangizaw W/Senbet, supervised by Professor Chebykin, and the painting *It Is Time to Go Home* by Abrham Gebre Gissila, supervised by Genre Paintings Professor Viktor Shatalin. These works aligned with the Socialist Realism of the final decade of the Soviet Union.

The unity of the thematic orientation of art reveals one of the most important features of its international character, wrote Petro Govdia,<sup>84</sup> art historian and head of the Faculty of Theory and History of Art at KSAI, in a 1974 article. However, it would be a mistake to reduce Socialist Realism mainly to a poseur propaganda thematic range, as the emphasis was heavily upon patriotic and nationalist imagery.<sup>85</sup> Yet it was a distinctive Soviet genre of national discourse. Refraining from challenging the state's status quo was sufficient. Meanwhile, the so-called nonofficial art was tolerated only within certain limits, functioning as long as it did not cross the boundaries of what was permitted. Thus, the production of "a genre of generic images," in the words of Giorgis, was widespread. For those who avoided revolutionary themes, the preferred subjects were landscapes, people, alphabets, and similar motifs.<sup>86</sup> Giorgis cites Geta Mekonnen, who noted that "most of the heroes depicted by the most talented students were martyrs"—figures who struggled against colonial conquerors, the Emperor, and other oppressors,

81 Chebykin, Belichko, "Khudozhnii shkoli alternatyvy nemaie" [There Is No Alternative to Art School], 2.

82 The diploma artworks were taken by the artists to their home countries upon graduation; the titles of these artworks are recorded in the personal documents of the graduates. Archive of the NAFAA.

83 All three examples are from the last Soviet-era students who studied between 1985 and 1992. Archive of the NAFAA.

84 Hovdia, "Mitsniuchi zviazky, tvorche yednannia" [Strengthening Ties, Creative Unity], *Obrazotvorche mystetstvo*, 2.

85 See also Cowcher, who notes that among painting students, the most popular themes were not the transnational "socialist" ones but rather those glorifying familiar national heroes. Cowcher, "From Pushkin to Perestroika," 63.

86 Giorgis, *Ethiopian Modernism: A Subaltern Perspective*, 212, 216.

heroic characters who played important roles in Ethiopian history.<sup>87</sup> However, Giorgis refuses to perceive these choices as mere compliance with the requirements of Socialist Realism; rather, she views them as a form of silent protest by the artists. According to her, the state allowed these images of the past because they represented a certain symbolism of unity and nationhood. I agree with Giorgis's precise analysis and arguments—for example, that the nostalgic turn to history reflected an epochal crisis of citizenship as the impossibility of the present. However, I argue that it was still in line with the method of Socialist Realism.

The Derg attempted to replicate the politics and language of Marxist aesthetics, but it was unclear what exactly was expected from artists.<sup>88</sup> Students were called upon to imitate others' interpretations of Marxist aesthetics in order to comply with the image of art appropriate for the socialist state. However, Socialist Realism was developed by practitioners in various places and realized through various interpretations, while theoretical guidelines were provided by ideologues. Seyum Wolde, the main theoretician of the Fine Arts School of Addis Ababa throughout the Derg regime, in the 1980s introduced rules applied in the training of art students, aimed at directing the production of graduation works within specific thematic boundaries. These themes included the glorification of the proletarian struggle and its achievements, patriotism, heroes defending the motherland and martyrs (cf. the earlier statement by Mekonnen), work equality, humanity, cultural festivities, and the cultural life of marginalized societies and ethnic groups.<sup>89</sup> Some of these notions were quite vague and abstract—for example, whether all heroes or ethnic groups were allowed, and how to represent the humanity of the brutally repressive regime. Ultimately, it was the repressive government that decided the relevance of artistic manifestations and which art was deemed anti-revolutionary. As in the Soviet Union, the final authority on Marxist-Leninist aesthetics was Stalin.<sup>90</sup> Therefore, the professors' encouragement of students in Kyiv to refer to their own history in their qualification works did not contradict Seyum Wolde's guidelines, as

87 Giorgis, *Ethiopian Modernism: A Subaltern Perspective*, 205.

88 Giorgis, *Ethiopian Modernism: A Subaltern Perspective*, 191

89 Woubshet, "An Interview with Bekele Mekonnen," 33.

90 Klark, "Marksistsko-leninskaia estetika" [Marxist-Leninist Aesthetics], 357–8.

they were broad and consistent with Socialist Realism's expectation that art should arise from strong foundations of a "national school."<sup>91</sup>

Nevertheless, beyond fulfilling imposed artistic tasks, the main focus of study was acquiring a work ethic rooted in rigor and discipline. This functioned as a method of subordination and complicity—partisanship being one of the two main principles—where everyone was connected through a network of tight relations under the banner of high values such as humanity, peace, and solidarity. The educational role of art production exceeded simple didacticism. After graduation, the artist's task as a representative of society was to shape its new consciousness. Thus, artists working within Socialist Realism participated in the construction of the "false consciousness" of the new historiography and encouraged society to follow it. As Giorgis describes, this was more a form of capitulation—counterfeiting what was driven by a lack of emancipatory potential caused by witnessing cruel repression and naturalized through the mythification of history, aided by nostalgic images and imaginary landscapes that offered some relief during horrifying times. Giorgis seeks traces of resistance in the works of artists constrained by Socialist Realism.<sup>92</sup> Yet, the artist's individuality was erased. The machinery of artistic production was deliberately created to subjugate collective consciousness, fostering a false nationalist identification and asserting a collective truth through historical images designed to uphold the prevailing ideology.

#### The application of the method and its consequences

While Socialist Realism in the Soviet Union developed into a sophisticated system or method to discipline society, in Ethiopia the regime employed it only partially, mostly for representative purposes. The realistic skills, successfully acquired through scholarships at art schools, were effectively used to illustrate propaganda.<sup>93</sup> However, the Ethiopian regime was also aware that mobilizing a nation towards a new ideology through visual arts was impossible without the necessary infrastructure.<sup>94</sup> This was not the case in the Soviet Union, where such infrastructure developed alongside

91 Cowcher, "From Pushkin to Perestroika," 63.

92 Giorgis, *Ethiopian Modernism: A Subaltern Perspective*, 211.

93 Woubshet, "An Interview with Bekele Mekonnen," 219.

94 Ibid., 218–9.

Socialist Realism. Thus, Social Realism there was characterized by more than pragmatic didacticism. The method included restructuring the institutional framework of art and integrating everyone into a single authorized historical narrative. It was designed as a tool for those seeking to seize power and eliminate the artist's role as a free political agent. As Mekonnen notes, art itself was not the Ethiopian regime's primary interest; rather, their focus was on controlling the institutional sphere and maintaining the bureaucratic, political, and economic structures firmly in place. For this purpose, the cultural infrastructure model of Socialist Realism was ideal. Considering art's potential to serve social and political purposes, the Derg viewed Socialist Realism strategically. But did they fully grasp its power to structure life through a discipline of institutional relations?

However, the aftermath of implementing Soviet-style cultural politics, facilitated through Ukraine, is reflected in modern Ethiopian society. This legacy is evident in governmental infrastructures, widespread lack of critical thinking, and self-censorship<sup>95</sup>—structural consequences that endure to this day. The impact of the scholarship programs, even during their relatively brief existence, is still visible in the Fine Arts School of Addis Ababa, where the majority of faculty staff are alumni of socialist countries.<sup>96</sup> As Giorgis clearly states, the introduction of Derg's Marxism into Ethiopian history triggered a profound crisis in art and culture, with seventeen years of socialist rule culminating in intellectual bankruptcy.<sup>97</sup> Meanwhile, the Kyiv Art Academy remains unable to fully shed the imposed and accepted pedagogical methods inherited from Soviet times. Although now detached from the Soviet ideology, the institution continues to operate by inertia.

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95 Ibid., 219.

96 Giorgis, *Modernist Art in Ethiopia*, 224.

97 Giorgis, *Ethiopian Modernism: A Subaltern Perspective*, 71–72, 189.

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Santrauka

## Socialistinio realizmo metodas tarptautiniuose santykiuose: Ukrainos ir Etiopijos meninio ugdymo atvejai

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*Reikšminiai žodžiai:* socialistinis realizmas, meninis ugdymas, Etiopijos studentai, Kyjivo valstybinis dailės institutas, Adis Abebos vaizduojamojo meno mokykla, XX a. 9 deš. menas.

1974 m. valdžioje įsitvirtinęs Etiopijos režimas priėmė sovietų valstybės suformuotą socialistinio realizmo ideologiją kaip oficialų meno standartą. Vos pasirašius susitarimus su socialistinėmis šalimis, į jas buvo siunčiami jauni specialistai įgyti žinių ir įvaldyti nustatytas meno formas. Kyjivo valstybinis dailės institutas taip pat dalyvavo Etiopijos studentų ir kitų užsieniečių, atvykusių dėl Maskvos vykdomos politikos, meno studijų programoje. Tai buvo vienpusis bendradarbiavimas – studentai buvo siunčiami ideologiniam ir meniniam ugdymui į SSRS miestus, kad įgytų žinių, reikalingų Etiopijos Socialistinės Liaudies Respublikos plėtrai. Šiomis studijomis siekta kompensuoti kvalifikuotų žinių trūkumą ir parengti meno kūrėjus, gebančius atitikti importuotos ideologijos reikalavimus. Dergo režimo reikalavimai menui – remti naują valstybės valdžią vaizdais, kuriuose galima buvo tiesiogiai atpažinti socialistinių šalių ir SSRS įtaką. Tam reikėjo įvaldyti realistinį vaizdavimo būdą, monumentaliosios plastikos žinias ir plakatų kūrimo įgūdžius.

Etiopijos institucinė sfera buvo reformuota pagal sovietinį modelį ir apibrėžė, kaip šalyje turi būti kuriamas menas. Adis Abebos dailės mokyklai atiteko naujojo meno laboratorijos vaidmuo, perimant socialistinio realizmo struktūrinius bruožus. Vis dėlto socialistinio realizmo įvaizdis įvairiose valstybėse skyrėsi, o meno tematikos spektras buvo gana neapibrėžtas. Visuotinis socialistinio realizmo tikslas – kurti vietos istoriją, atitinkančią didįjį naratyvą, todėl Kyjive buvo skatinami užsienio studentų diplominiai darbai nacionaline tematika.

Ukraina, kuri Rusijos politikai buvo pajungta anksčiau nei Etiopija, atliko naujų mentoriaus vaidmenį, supažindindama juos su socialistinio realizmo metodu. Čia studentams buvo suteikiama reikiamų žinių ir nustatyta vieta hierarchijoje. Didžiąją edukacinės programos dalį sudarė rusų kalbos ir kultūros pažinimas, įvardytas kaip komunistinės istoriografijos pagrindas. Pagrindinis socialistinio realizmo metodo rezultatas – hierarchinė institucinė sistema, turėjusi žalojantį poveikį visiems dalyvavusiems ir itin represyvi. Socialistiniam realizmui, jei jį laikytume metodu, būdinga užgniaužti subjektyvumą ir valią socialinėje struktūroje, sukurti naują žmogų, pritariančią partijos politikai, palaikančią jos principus ir neturintį individualios atsakomybės. Kiek tai pavyko, galima spręsti iš kultūrinės krizės, paveiktos socialistinio realizmo.

Etiopijos studentai gyveno daug geresnėmis socialinėmis sąlygomis nei ukrainiečiai, tai lėmė skirtinga vidaus ir užsienio kultūros politika. Jie galėjo laisvai keliauti, o anglų kalbos mokėjimas ir ryšiai su visos Europos atstovais, užsimezgę iki revoliucijos, jiems labai padėjo.

Kadangi sovietinių respublikų meno internacionalizmas apsiribojo SSRS sienomis, buvo beveik neįmanoma užmegzti tikrų kultūrinių ryšių su tokių tolimų šalių kaip Etiopija menininkais, išskyrus tuos, kurie vyko žmogišku lygmeniu arba buvo primesti valstybės. Etiopijos meno studentai, paskutiniaisiais Sovietų Sąjungos gyvavimo metais šešerius metus praleidę Kyjive, susidūrė su gilią regresijos laikotarpiu visuomenėje ir nepaliko beveik jokio pėdsako to meto šalies meno istorijoje.