

# Natural Temperature

## —Regional Oil Paintings by Russian Contemporary Artist Vagin Evgeny

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**How to cite this paper:** Wang, H. X. (2024). Natural Temperature. *Art and Design Review*, 12, 11-18.  
<https://doi.org/10.4236/adr.2024.121002>

**Received:** November 6, 2023

**Accepted:** December 22, 2023

**Published:** December 25, 2023

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### Abstract

In history, Russia has many familiar artists and many classic works of art. Nowadays, after absorbing the western visual art concept, Russian artists have integrated the traditional Russian regional creation concept and produced a series of interesting works. Vagin Evgeny is a new generation of Russian painter. He integrates some of the impressionist creative ideas. His works are direct, bold, with strong brushstrokes and regional themes. He is a noteworthy painter.

### Keywords

Impressionism, Russian Contemporary Oil Paintings, Regionalism, Colors and Musicality

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background and Significance of Topic Selection

What comes to mind when you hear the term “Russian art”? Ordinary people may think of realistic oil paintings that criticize realism like “The Slender Man on the Volga River” (Ni, 2014) or realistic oil paintings that depict the bottom of society and expose the darkness of society or Soviet-style sketch characters with strong contrast between light and shade and rigorous and meticulous depiction... But this is a disservice to Russian artists and to the great contribution made to realist art, a disservice. Since the 1990s, the world has been able to re-enter the dazzling world of Russian art, free from the political restrictions imposed on art during the Soviet era. Among them Impressionist art can be said to be the most eye-catching one. As early as the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Russian artists participated in the study of European art movements, influenced by European Impressionism, that is, depicting real life, nature and light became an im-

portant form of artistic creation for Russian painters. It's easy to imagine the sense of freedom that artists felt when they were able to depict the activities of their friends and neighbors in real life, and early images depicting rural life in Russia were both culturally and emotionally important to the Russian psyche. Isaac Levitan (Cynthia, 2022) did this well. His works not only show the beautiful natural features of Russia, but also give nature with unique social significance and human emotions. He puts his profound thoughts and rich emotions into the landscape creation, so that his works are extremely poetic, profound and true to express the characteristics of Russian nature and the beauty of many aspects. In his work "Dusk", we can see a quiet and peaceful lake, the sunset reflected on the lake, his work as a useful solid color to show the traces of winter scenery, with some elements of Impressionism. After that, there are the amazing works created by the famous brothers Sergei Tkachov & Aleksei Tkachov (Liu, 2004; Yi & Liu, 1983; Pan, 2018). Their paintings, especially those of landscapes and children, are bold and use vibrant colors, light and dark contrasts, and emotional content to form powerful paintings with vivid expression. Then there's Bato Dugarzhapov (Li, 2018), whose thick, juicy brushwork and bright, pure colors are breathtaking. In his almost abstract impressionist works, we feel that the light is sometimes almost scorching. Another artist is Peter Bezrukov (Li, 2018), who has a similar passion for painting, light and brush strokes, and these artists have an amazing talent for light and color expression. As an educator and researcher in the painting industry, in the face of the impetuous art creation environment and the disturbance brought by artificial intelligence, how to continue the sustainable development of art aesthetics is a problem? It should be an important criterion to excavate the essential things, adhere to aesthetics, adhere to the theme of creation, and return to nature. The purpose of this study is also to confirm this view, which will be elaborated in the following paragraphs. The artistic achievements of Russia occupy an important position in the world art history, and the creative ideas of contemporary Russian artists are also full of flowers. The so-called learning from different strengths and exploring the creative ideas of contemporary Russian artists can provide a different artistic outlet for future practitioners.

## 1.2. Overview of Domestic and Foreign Research

Vagin Evgeny is a young and gifted contemporary artist and teacher, as well as a Plein Air painter (Isaacson, 2014). Born in 1985 in Barakilevo Town, Alexandrov District, Vladimir Oblast, Russia, he graduated from the painting Department of Vladimir State Humanities University in 2008 and won the third place in the 2016 Moscow Art House Open Class Painting competition. Literature review about him is difficult to find, but some traces can be found about the Vladimir School of Painting (Li, 2022), which is a school full of visual art and culture, and has been interwoven with Russian nationality, religion, culture and art since its inception. Their works are mainly landscape paintings, although they still present

concrete content. But the thick picture, solid brush strokes and texture of the effect of the color, often make us surprised and excited. It can be seen from his works that Vagin, the protagonist of the article, is influenced by this and has a strong regional tendency, no matter in the theme of creation or the expression of color.

## 2. Regional Themes: Shaping the Temperature of the Outdoor Forest

Vagin's painting style inherited the essence of Impressionism, which is to capture the sensory effects of the moment of nature—the impression that objects make on the eye in a brief moment of light. The most impressive and distinctive thing about his works is that he uses colors to reflect the natural temperature, giving people an incredible sense of immersion. As a painter of the new generation, the theme of his current works is not very stable, but the works describing the theme of forest can best represent his characteristics and have the most visual impact.

Vagin lives in a small town northeast of Moscow, where winter snows heavily but temperatures are not too cold, making it ideal for outdoor sketching. Therefore, he has a series of outdoor sketch works on the theme of forest. When we see his paintings, the first thing we encounter is a thick chill. He expresses the cold of Russian winter ice and snow on the picture through thick and juicy brushstrokes, which is the characteristic of Russian painters. The color range of this blue is very large, and the light pink and lemon yellow are used to express the warmth of sunlight in the air through the branches of the ground. The contrast between cold and warm is extremely strong, reflecting the rugged, simple and practical personality characteristics of Russians. It is like welcoming a warm current in the ice and snow, which makes people very comfortable.

From the expression of several forest-themed works by Vagin, we can see that Vagin is unique in shaping the theme of sunrise. The Impressionist master Monet's sunrise uses water as a medium to express the halo and atmosphere, and his works are intangible, while Joaquin's works are regional, he uses ice and snow to express the halo. This includes the soft snow on the ground, the thick snow on the branches of the trees, and the ground that is partially frozen after melting to reflect the halo, and Vagin is able to grasp this detail of expression, it is instantaneous, it is an impressionist technique of expression, and he is a careful and rigorous painter. Vagin likes thick, juicy brushstrokes. His works have a strong sense of texture and strong expressionism. His brushstrokes are still performed within the scope of "shape", not leaving the concrete to reach the level of abstraction. However, his brushstrokes are soft and light in the expression of branches and snow on the roof, and slightly stiff in the expression of snow on the ground, with insufficient permeability in the dark colors. This needs to be improved (**Figure 1 & Figure 2**).



**Figure 1.** Winter forest 1 Oil on canvas 50 × 70 2020.



**Figure 2.** Winter forest 2 Oil on canvas 50 × 70 2020.

### **3. Color and Musicality: Pulsating Golden and Orange Sunlight**

Drawing on the lyricism in music with color is the main feature of the subjective color musicality of oil painting. Before the viewer knows what is represented in

the painting, he is immediately caught by the magic music of its color. I do see this in Vagin's works, the most significant is that his beating gold and orange sunlight and halo are like a beating note, beautiful and eye-catching, making his picture move and have a sense of rhythm, which is different from ordinary works. This musicality of painting is the real advantage over other arts, because it touches the deepest part of the soul. The subjective color of Vagin's works conveys thoughts and emotions with its clear hue and rich tone. The change of color color is very important to enrich the image, convey the emotion and refine the artistic conception, just like the melody formed by the rhythm and harmony of music, which is rich in the characteristics of thought and emotion expression. Vagin's work is like a clear light music, calm, climax.

The musical nature of the subjective color of the oil painting of the post-Impressionist painter Van Gogh (Zhang, 2008) will experience its musical characteristics into a meaningful form of expression, he believes that painting should "leave more from reality, and create color music". As a result, his "color combined with emotion, like music combined with excitement" blocks of color and brushstrokes became the ultimate powerful means of expressing himself.

Whether it is the post-Impressionist painters or the modernist pioneers, they comply with the various image elements according to the principle of color and light movement, to synthesize the color law, the space-time isomorphism of sight and hearing, and create the sound effect of color in the depiction of objective objects.

Vagin's use of color is not just a beating color note; I even see the shadow of James Abbott McNeill Whistler (Shi, 2023). Whistler's work allows color to advance in the picture to the level of low to high in music. We can also see this level of advancement from dark to bright in Vagin's work, but not as dark and stuffy as his coordination, Vagin's technique is still young, blunt and incongruous but also showing signs (Figures 3-5).

#### 4. Discussion

Vagin has not yet entered the stage of pure light and shadow expression of Impressionism. Both Impressionism and pointillism are time-consuming and laborious in expression and may not have good results. Vagin uses simple means, perhaps impressionism or realism or expressionism, and he may draw on some of these things to express his works and simplify the operation. But the effect is direct, in the expression of the day scene, the cold and warm contrast of the picture is still direct, the dark part is a blue atmosphere, the light part is a high purity of gold or lemon yellow, the brightness of the whole picture is very high, giving people a strong visual impact, perceptual people like the impact of this picture. He shows light and shadow under the trees, which enlivens the atmosphere of the picture a lot.

For a growing painter, the first thing to do in creation is to have a relatively



**Figure 3.** Winter Afterglow 1 Oil on canvas 50 × 70 2020.



**Figure 4.** Winter Sun day 1 Oil on canvas 40 × 50 2019.

stable theme that he wants to express, and to carry out a series of creations around this theme, which Vagin has. The outdoor scenery he expressed is a stable creation theme. Secondly, where the works come from and take root, that is, the regional nature of creation, which Vagin also possesses. His works are very familiar with the landscape of his hometown and describe the scenery and architecture of his hometown, which is a fixed emotion and a stable gene for creation.



**Figure 5.** Winter Sun day 2 Oil on canvas 40 × 50 2019.

Finally, the way of creation, which can be style, genre, expression, etc., needs long-term exploration to mature, and style and techniques are also subject to change, as a young painter, Vagin may also change a certain style in the future, combining art with social life, which is a common practice, but it is unknown.

## 5. Conclusion

We can now see that Vagin's works have the existence of "form", and he does not completely abandon the outer outline of the complete impressionism, nor is it showy expressionism, or other aestheticism. He is influenced by the tradition of Russian realistic oil painting teaching, and has not completely jumped out of the circle of representativity, but is influenced by Impressionism and other positive influences. From the way of painting to the use of light, brush strokes, pigments have been stylized. We all know that French painter Claude Monet may be considered the father of Impressionism, but many other masters have helped shape the style's rich evolution over time, from Nicolai Fechin to Edgar Payne. In fact, today, Impressionism or certain schools represent a wide range of expressive styles, but the principle of celebrating color and light in pursuit of expressiveness and visual impact is what I think is the theme of painting today, and Vagin's work also confirms this.

Native Russian artistic creation is happy to celebrate ordinary people, depicting their lives, hopes, dreams and emotions in an intimate way, with a deep concern for the land, its people and the lives of all. Stylistically, contemporary Russian Impressionist artists were heavily influenced by many of the characteristics of French Impressionism, such as the use of heavy brushstrokes, flat palette, outdoors painting style, and bold colors, all of which translated into intense,

pure Russian contemporary art. Emotionally and intellectually, Russian art grew out of the reaction of Tolstoy, Mussorgsky, Repin, and other influential artists to the political turmoil and miserable living conditions of ordinary people in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Tsarist Russia. Contemporary Russian artists have created many unique themes and expressions as well as beautiful depictions of the human spirit, promoting Russia's rich cultural heritage.

### Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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