

УДК 94(47) + 76.03/09

DOI 10.28995/2073-0101-2019-2-610-622

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“These Bright Eyes Were Free from Vagueness”: Peculiar Graphic Art of the Leningrad Artist Vera Milyutina

Abstract

The article studies the prewar artistic legacy of the Leningrad artist Vera Milyutina (1903-1987). Her most famous work is a graphic series *The Hermitage in the Days of the Siege of Leningrad* (1942). Art historians have ignored Vera Milyutina's prewar works, wherefrom springs the relevance of this article. It attempts to analyze Milyutina's works stored in the Central State Archive of Literature and Art of St. Petersburg. The author sets off to study the documents on Milyutina's summer trips in 1937-1939, their objects and routes and to analyze the works of art

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created in these trips and demonstrate their importance for formation of Vera Milyutina's graphic art. The article draws on unpublished documents, works of art, and photos from the Central State Archive of Literature and Art of St. Petersburg. During her summer trips Vera Milyutina visited different parts of the Soviet Union: Karelia, the Altai, the Gorky (now Nizhny Novgorod) region. Pencil, ink, and watercolour paintings give an account of Vera Milyutina's trip to Karelia in 1937. There is an album, which had by some miracle survived the Siege of Leningrad; it is a unique document on her 1938 trip to Altai. It contains drawings, notes, hortus siccus, photos, and documents from the trip. A detailed account of the trip to the Gorky region in 1939 was left in the artist's diary covering 1939 to 1953 and in her memoirs prepared in 1985. There are numerous drawings of Lake Svetloyar and town Semenov (both in the Gorky region). Art review of materials from the Central State Archive of Literature and Art of St. Petersburg concludes that Vera Milyutina was exacting in her work, followed the principles of academic drawing according to the system of Pavel Chistyakov (Russian artist from St. Petersburg, 1832-1919), and chose timeless subjects for her work. The article can be of use to art historians and archivists, who study the evolution of the Soviet graphic art and biographies of the Leningrad artists.



Keywords

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Archive, historical source, Vera V. Milyutina, Leningrad art, realism, Soviet graphic art, 1930s, creative assignments, classical drawing.

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Written by Aleksandra A. Shanyavskaya
Thursday, 16 December 2021 17:48

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Submitted 10.07.2018, published (for Citation):

Shanyavskaya, A. A. “Etot svetlyi vzglyad ne znal fal'shi”. Osobennosti grafiki leningradskoi khudozhnitsy Very Milyutinoi [“These Bright Eyes Were Free from Vagueness”: Peculiar Graphic Art of the Leningrad Artist Vera Milyutina. In Russ.]. IN: Vestnik arhivista / Herald of an Archivist, 2019, no. 2, pp. 610-622. doi 10.28995/2073-0101-2019-2-610-622

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Полностью материал публикуется в российском историко-архивоведческом журнале ВЕСТНИК АРХИВИСТА. Ознакомьтесь с условиями подписки [здесь](#) .