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THE PHENOMENON OF I.V. SAVITSKY IN THE FORMATION OF THE STATE MUSEUM OF ARTS OF THE REPUBLIC OF KARAKALPAKSTAN

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Abstract: This article examines the role of I.V. Savitsky in the formation of the State Museum of Art of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, drawing on an analysis of annual reports, museum documentation, and materials detailing the composition and characteristics of the museum's holdings. It traces the key areas of his work: organizing museum operations, building the collection, conducting expeditions, developing conservation and restoration practices, establishing criteria for the selection of artworks, and organizing exhibitions and educational programs. Particular attention is paid to the fact that, from the museum's earliest years, its records reflect an ambition to create not merely a large art collection, but a distinctive assemblage that would enable a comprehensive study of specific artistic phenomena and the work of individual artists. The article concludes that the "Savitsky phenomenon" lay in his ability to simultaneously fulfill the roles of administrator, collector, researcher, organizer, and conceptual architect of the museum's collection.
Key words: I.V. Savitsky, State Museum of Art of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, museum studies, museum collection, collection development, folk applied art, fine art, expeditions, restoration, museum exhibition.

INTRODUCTION. The history of the State Museum of Arts of the Republic of Karakalpakstan is inextricably linked with the name of I.V. Savitsky. However, a scientific understanding of his role requires going beyond the biographical approach and a general statement about his significant contribution to the creation of the museum. It is important to determine how the specific actions of the director influenced the structure of the museum institution, the principles of collection, the direction of scientific work and, ultimately, the formation of the identity of the museum itself.

The State Museum of Arts of the Karakalpak Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic was created on February 5, 1966 by the decision of the Council of Ministers and the Regional Committee of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan of the Karakalpak ASSR; a part of the building of the local history museum with a total area of 155 m² was allocated for the museum. The museum officially opened to visitors on May 1, 1966. Initially, three directions were identified: folk applied arts, ancient art of Khorezm and fine arts. Already at the first stage, the exhibition presented works by Karakalpak, Uzbek and Moscow artists, as well as examples of ancient and applied art [1].

In 1966, only four people worked at the museum, and the space did not allow for the creation of a coherent permanent exhibition. The exhibition changed several times throughout the year; in total, 1185 works were shown, among which 502 belonged to applied art, 376 to ancient art and 277 to works by artists of Karakalpakstan, Uzbekistan and Moscow [2].

Against this backdrop, the work of I.V. Savitsky takes on special significance. He not only served as director starting in February 1966 but also personally participated in collecting expeditions,

oversaw construction and logistical matters, organized exhibitions, fostered applied arts, and established professional connections. As early as 1966, Savitsky undertook trips to Tashkent, Moscow, Vilnius, and Kaunas to acquire works for the collection and seek out a design for the museum's future building.

This article aims to identify the key components of the "Savitsky phenomenon" in the formation of the State Museum of Art of Karakalpakstan and to demonstrate how his activities contributed to the museum's institutional and substantive development. To this end, the study examines his role in establishing infrastructure, his collecting and expeditionary work, his principles of collection development, and his efforts regarding holdings, restoration, exhibitions, and scholarly activity.

ANALYSIS OF MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY. The study draws primarily upon reports from the State Museum of Art of the Karakalpak ASSR covering the years 1966–1982; these documents contain information regarding the museum's structure, staffing, collection development, expeditions, and its exhibition, conservation, research, and educational activities. This body of sources makes it possible to reconstruct the museum's operations during the tenure of I.V. Savitsky and to compare general perceptions of his role with specific administrative and professional practices.

Methodologically, the study relies on historical-systemic, problem-chronological, and comparative-analytical approaches. The historical-systemic approach allows the museum to be viewed not merely as a collection of objects, but as an institution encompassing activities related to collections, exhibitions, conservation, research, and education. The problem-chronological method is used to trace the sequence of transformations during the museum's early years. The comparative-analytical approach enables a comparison between the institution's initial state and the trajectory of its subsequent development.

Of particular importance is the analysis of museum documentation as evidence of everyday institutional practice. The reports show not only the results, but also the problems: lack of premises, specialists, equipment, funds for the purchase of exhibits and the difficulty of scientific processing of rapidly growing funds. It is the combination of these restrictions with the intensity of collecting and organizational work that makes it possible to more accurately determine the specifics of Savitsky's activities.

RESULTS. The museum was established under conditions of severely limited resources. In 1966, the institution was allocated only a portion of the building housing the local history museum. The available space totaled 155 m², and the staff consisted of a director, a curator of collections, and two gallery attendants. Resource constraints directly impacted the ability to scientifically process the collections and create a permanent exhibition. Under these circumstances, the director's work extended far beyond mere administrative management. During the very first year, Savitsky handled collection development, organized field trips, sought out a design for a future museum building, and worked to expand the institution's professional capabilities. The museum's premises were deemed unsuitable for storage, restoration, staff operations, hosting public events, or reviving applied arts. Management faced the challenge of building an institutional infrastructure while simultaneously assembling the collection.

By 1969, the situation had gradually improved. Pursuant to a decree dated August 10, 1969, additional space within the local history museum was transferred to the museum, bringing the total area to 580 m²—with 390 m² designated for exhibitions and 64 m² for storage. That same year, a special commission from the USSR Ministry of Culture commended the successful efforts to establish the museum and build its collections.

The creation of a restoration facility marked a significant milestone in the museum's institutional development. Between 1967 and 1969, specialized departments were established for painting, graphic art, metalwork, and applied arts, with staff members undergoing training at restoration workshops and museums in Moscow. In 1969, the staff built an auxiliary facility for restoration work and a carpentry workshop using their own resources [3].

One of the most notable aspects of Savitsky's work was his intensive effort to build the museum's collections. As early as 1966, the director traveled to Tashkent and Moscow to acquire works. In 1967, Savitsky was sent to Moscow to collect artworks, address the revival of applied arts, organize exhibitions—both in Moscow and abroad—and handle supply-related matters; he undertook similar tasks in Tashkent.

Acquisition efforts also took place within Karakalpakstan itself. In July 1967, Savitsky and museum staff traveled to the Turtkul District to collect examples of applied art. That same year, he helped organize an exhibition as part of the "Days of Karakalpak Art" in Urgench. Thus, collection building went hand in hand with identifying local artistic material and showcasing it outside the republic. Crucially, this was not merely a matter of mechanically amassing works; given its limited financial resources, the museum sought to focus on artists and artistic phenomena that would lend the collection a distinctive character.

For a young museum, expeditions served a threefold purpose: expanding the collection, studying the material, and establishing contact with the bearers of artistic traditions. This approach made it possible to preserve not only the objects themselves but also information regarding their origins, methods of creation, and cultural context. Traditional art became more than just an illustration of the past; it became a subject of systematic study in its own right. The museum's inaugural exhibition in 1966 already featured 502 objects of applied art [1].

Initially, the museum's structure encompassed folk applied art, the ancient art of Khorezm, and fine art. Subsequently, this scope expanded to include a broader representation of professional art from Karakalpakstan and Uzbekistan. Materials regarding the museum highlight works by Alexander Volkov, Ural Tansykbaev, Viktor Ufimtsev, Nadezhda Kashina, Elena Korovay, and other artists from Uzbekistan active during the 1920s and 1940s [2]. A crucial component of the collection became the Russian avant-garde holdings — assembled by Savitsky during the 1960s and 1970s — featuring works by Robert Falk, Alexander Shevchenko, Lyubov Popova, Alexander Volkov, Nadezhda Udaltsova, Mikhail Sokolov, Ivan Kudryashov, and others. It was precisely this combination of local and broader artistic material that became one of the museum's defining characteristics. Karakalpak folk art, the ancient art of Khorezm, professional art from Karakalpakstan and Uzbekistan, and works by artists linked to the artistic movements of the Soviet era collectively formed an interconnected field for the study of artistic culture.

The work involved in managing the museum's holdings gradually created a need to shift from mere accumulation to scholarly processing. The rapidly growing collection necessitated the creation of catalog cards, the preparation of albums, monographs, and catalogs, and the hosting of lectures and tours. In 1970, the museum reported enhanced capabilities in exhibition, educational, and scholarly activities; exhibition space had nearly doubled.

In 1970, the museum organized thematic exhibitions and contributed items to exhibitions in Tashkent and Moscow. Its collecting efforts earned a diploma from the USSR Ministry of Culture for successful collection development as part of the All-Union Museum Review. Concurrently, work was underway on an album of Soviet-era fine art, materials for an album on Karakalpak folk applied art, and a report on the museum's collection-building methodology for an All-Union conference of art museums focused on acquisition practices [4].

In 1966, the exhibition layout was frequently altered due to limited floor space. Initially, three main areas were showcased; however, some applied art displays eventually had to be removed, and the museum shifted to hosting periodic thematic exhibitions. Despite these constraints, the fledgling museum participated in republic-level and all-Union events and exhibited its holdings outside Karakalpakstan. In 1969, the Ministry of Culture of the USSR recognized the success of the museum's establishment and collection-building efforts; the museum also received a Certificate of Honor from the Supreme Soviet of the Uzbek SSR for the successful staging of an exhibition during the "Days of Uzbekistan" festival. In 1970, exhibitions were organized featuring graphic art dedicated to V.I. Lenin and the Revolution, paintings by Uzbek artists from the 1930s depicting collectivization and industrialization, and works by artists from Karakalpakstan.

By 1969, the departments for cultural-educational activities and applied arts lacked adequate staffing, and facilities for restoration and operations had to be set up using internal resources. Meanwhile, the museum's holdings had already surpassed 10,000 items, necessitating staff expansion and the development of scholarly collection processing.

It is precisely this contradiction that offers deeper insight into the Savitsky phenomenon. The issue lies not merely in the scale of the collection, but in the ability to develop the museum in an environment where infrastructure objectively lagged behind the rapid growth of the holdings. The expansion of the collection created new demands regarding restoration, scholarly documentation, staffing, and facilities—yet addressing these needs opened up opportunities for the museum's further development.

DISCUSSION. The results obtained make it possible to refine our understanding of I.V. Savitsky's role in the museum's history. In popular and general literature, his name is often associated primarily with the unique collection—specifically the Russian avant-garde holdings. However, an analysis of museum documentation reveals that the creation of this collection was linked to a broader range of practices.

First, Savitsky operated in a context where museum infrastructure was virtually non-existent. In 1966, the institution occupied seven rooms and a corridor with a total area of 155 m², and the staff consisted of just four people. Consequently, his initial efforts were directed simultaneously toward building the collection and establishing the very mechanisms of museum operations.

Second, the acquisition process was not entirely haphazard. Documents reveal a deliberate strategy to create a distinctive collection and to gather a more comprehensive body of work by specific artists. This principle explains why the collection subsequently acquired such a pronounced individual character.

Third, Savitsky focused not only on acquiring artworks but also on their preservation, scholarly processing, and public presentation. The development of restoration workshops, the production of art albums, work on research materials, and participation in exhibitions in Tashkent and Moscow all attest to his ambition to transform the collection into a functioning research and cultural complex [5].

A shortage of specialists, space, and funding hindered the comprehensive scholarly processing of the collections and the creation of a permanent exhibition. Consequently, the process of the museum's formation cannot be viewed as having been fully completed in its initial years; on the contrary, documents from the 1970s and early 1980s reveal ongoing efforts to address infrastructural and staffing challenges. For this reason, the "Savitsky phenomenon" is best understood not in terms of the museum having been created by a single individual, but rather in terms of Savitsky's pivotal, system-defining role amidst limited resources. The museum's establishment was an institutional process involving government bodies, staff members,

conservators, artists, and other specialists; Savitsky, however, simultaneously shaped several key aspects of its development [6].

As a result, the museum's collection became more than a mere assemblage of acquired objects. It was shaped as a tool for preserving regional heritage, studying art history, and showcasing Karakalpakstan within a broader artistic landscape. It is precisely this interplay that allows Savitsky's work to be examined as a distinct subject of historical and museological study.

CONCLUSION. The analysis demonstrates that the "Savitsky phenomenon" in the formation of the State Museum of Art of the Republic of Karakalpakstan extends far beyond his roles as director or art collector. His activities encompassed virtually every key aspect of establishing the nascent museum: building the collection, organizing expeditions, developing conservation practices, curating exhibitions, establishing a scholarly foundation, addressing infrastructure needs, and formulating principles for artwork selection.

As early as 1966–1967, Savitsky was actively involved in collecting, traveling to Moscow, Tashkent, and other cities, while also managing exhibition logistics and planning the museum's future building. Concurrently, expeditionary work to collect examples of folk applied art was underway in Karakalpakstan [7]. Thus, from its inception, the museum took shape simultaneously as a repository of art objects and as a research institution.

A significant outcome was the creation of an interconnected system comprising collecting, preservation, research, and exhibition. The expansion of the collection drove the development of conservation and scholarly cataloging, while exhibition activities integrated the collection into the cultural landscape of the republic and beyond. Even amidst shortages of space, qualified personnel, and funding, the museum demonstrated steady institutional growth.

Consequently, the "Savitsky phenomenon" is best understood as a distinctive mode of museum practice in which the director's individual initiative combined with the collective efforts of the staff and state support mechanisms. Savitsky's significance lay not merely in his collecting activities, but in his systematic formulation of principles that enabled the collection to evolve into a system of profound scholarly and cultural importance.

This constitutes one of the key factors defining the unique historical character of the State Museum of Art of the Republic of Karakalpakstan. Its distinctive character did not emerge all at once but evolved through a long process in which Savitsky's work served as a key connecting link between the local artistic heritage, the history of professional art, and the development of the museum as an institution.

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