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## CREATIVE PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG ARTIST AS A METHODOLOGICAL PROBLEM: NOTES ON GALINA DULKINA'S EXHIBITION

*Summary:* The article is devoted to the exhibition of a young sculptor specializing on porcelain Galina Dulkina, which took place summer 2016 in the Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center (Moscow). Creative method of the author is interesting for many reasons. The specify of forms, dialogue with cultural tradition of Russian Avant-guard, recognizable personal handwriting make G. Dulkina's works a bright phenomenon in contemporary art practice.

*Keywords:* Galina Dulkina, porcelain, exhibition, the Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center, sculpture

*“Let the thoughts be clear,  
and the rest will come...  
Bulat Okudzhava*

Exhibition of a young sculptor specializing on porcelain Galina Dulkina, which took place summer 2016 in the Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center (Moscow), is interesting for many reasons. For the artist it became an occasion to summarize a decade of work in her creative laboratory, “put in order” her thoughts. An interested spectator (gallerist, expert, collector, critic) obtained an opportunity to make sure the correctness of the first appraisals, to meet one more time with “wonderful and original works” and “safely be stated that today Galina Dulkina — mature and at the same time *continuing to develop master*”<sup>1</sup>.



1. Hipstewr. 2009. Porcelain. Overglaze painting. Gilding. 32,3×24,4×11,7. The Natalia Opaleva's collection

Senior colleagues and teachers, who became acquainted with her new works at the exhibition, marked with satisfaction and pride a “rare for a modern young artist *consistency* in moving forward in its creative

concept, and *independence* from the fleeting temptations<sup>22</sup> of fashion and outwardly showy, superficial solutions.

Consistency and independence of artistic formation, creative energy — for contemporary artists, these are rare qualities, which are the most important preconditions of an expressive artistic unity of form achievement. If these qualities are present and felt in the work of art, the next step of a researcher becomes revealing of the peculiarities of its creator's plastic feeling/thinking that is the comprehension of this unity attaining. And from what threads is woven the world of the young artist — our contemporary and compatriot! The first points in the system of creative coordinates — family, cultural environment, years of study — are very important for the sculptor in question. In July 2015 in the town of Ramenskoye, Moscow region was held Galina Dulkina's solo exhibition "Porcelain. Collage. Painting" dedicated to the memory of art historian T.I. Dulkina<sup>3</sup>. In an interview with a reporter for the opening of the exhibition, Galina told that exactly her grandmother instilled her love for art. Sculptor's statements about the role of family traditions in her education and upbringing, of the precious memories stored from the childhood, paint a picture of a special atmosphere that prevailed in her family, where each one selflessly gave himself over to his work, and everyone united by the joy of meaningful and rewarding work. Inherited from the cultural environment ideas about ethical and aesthetic values of art, no doubt, influenced on the formation of Galina's personality, nourished her with intellectual energy, became a strong basis for an inherently Ionian attitude to the world.

The first teacher, first connoisseur, school lessons, first work are also important starting points in creative formation of the artist.

Galina studied the mastery of ceramics in the Academy named after Stroganov (MGHPA named after S. G. Stroganov), which has educated many generations of wonderful artists of this profile. The art of Russian ceramics, which has a rich historic experience, went through its last flourishing in 1960—1980-ies. On the grandiose Union exhibitions of these years, the works of ceramics, porcelain and faience of Moscow and not less original Leningrad schools, as well as other base Russian ceramics centers reflected the aspiration of its creators to stand easel



2. Drummer. 2006. Porcelain. 32×30,5×19. The Putnikov's collection

forms of ceramics in level with painting and sculpture, letting judge this form of creative work as high and spiritual art.

“Lessons and communication with Maria A. Burganova (prof. MGHPA named after S. G. Stroganov, author’s note) gave me a great deal. I feel her attention also now,— says Galina ... Ten years ago, Georgy A. Putnikov, collector and art dealer, a real connoisseur of art, bought my works. I will never forget his advices and disinterested help,

his subtle sense of humor, friendly house on Old Arbat. Georgy died early. I, many of my friends and colleagues miss him”<sup>4</sup>.

Galina specialized in the sphere of such a unique, especially Russian art phenomena as easel sculptural plastics, author porcelain. She passed her stage in the Imperial Porcelain Factory under the guidance of prominent St. Petersburg masters of porcelain Galina Shuljak and Mikhail Sorokin.

In doctor of Arts, authoritative expert in the field of ceramic art, T. L. Astrakhantseva’s recent speech, is given a succinct and precise description of the natural properties of ceramics, peculiarities of its Russian school: “Russian ceramics is a synthetic form of art, its imaginative specificity has two natures: pictorial, bringing it closer to painting and graphic art, and non-pictorial, allied to architecture and design. Their relationship in unity and harmony. This is the essence of ceramic art. Another criterion for assessment of authentic ceramic works is the presence of decoration as an expression of inner regularity and beauty of the object itself, penetrating the entire composition and plastic system. Moreover, the specificity of beauty is of a particular kind here — this beauty is transfigured, decorative, perceived as a meaningful quality where the form itself is an expression — a common, generic, transfigured. It would not have differed the ceramics of different decades of the last century could have differed, but, it certainly kept these two fundamental principles in its best manifestations”<sup>5</sup>.

The author porcelain attracts a modern artist with the opportunity of self-realization, independent growth and accomplishment of his plans.

The qualification (diploma) works by artists finishing their education can be successful and unsuccessful, but they are very rarely fatal. Sometimes artists remember such moments in the later years, discovering with surprise an unexpected depth and providentially in their early works. The composition “Memory of forty centuries”<sup>6</sup>, presented by Galina as a diploma, has such features. Penetrate into the plan essence, evaluate the merits and identify the unique qualities of the first major work made by the young artist can be considering it in two aspects: contextual, linked with actual professional issues of creativity in the field of art, and individual-creative, where revealed



3. Electric guitar. 2005. Porcelain. 35,5×19,5×11,5. The Pavel Teplukhin's collection



4. King. 2015. Porcelain. 29×18,2×10. Author's collection



5. Trumpeter. 2006. Porcelain. 37×21,5×13,7. The Pavel Teplukhin's collection

author's features of a creator of the work, expressed in discovered, invented, interpreted in its own way.



Brightly expressed author's character peculiar to the easel forms of porcelain reveals now tendencies to the complication of contents and methods of philosophizing. Works of decorative porcelain plastics enrich with new senses, allusions, connotations.

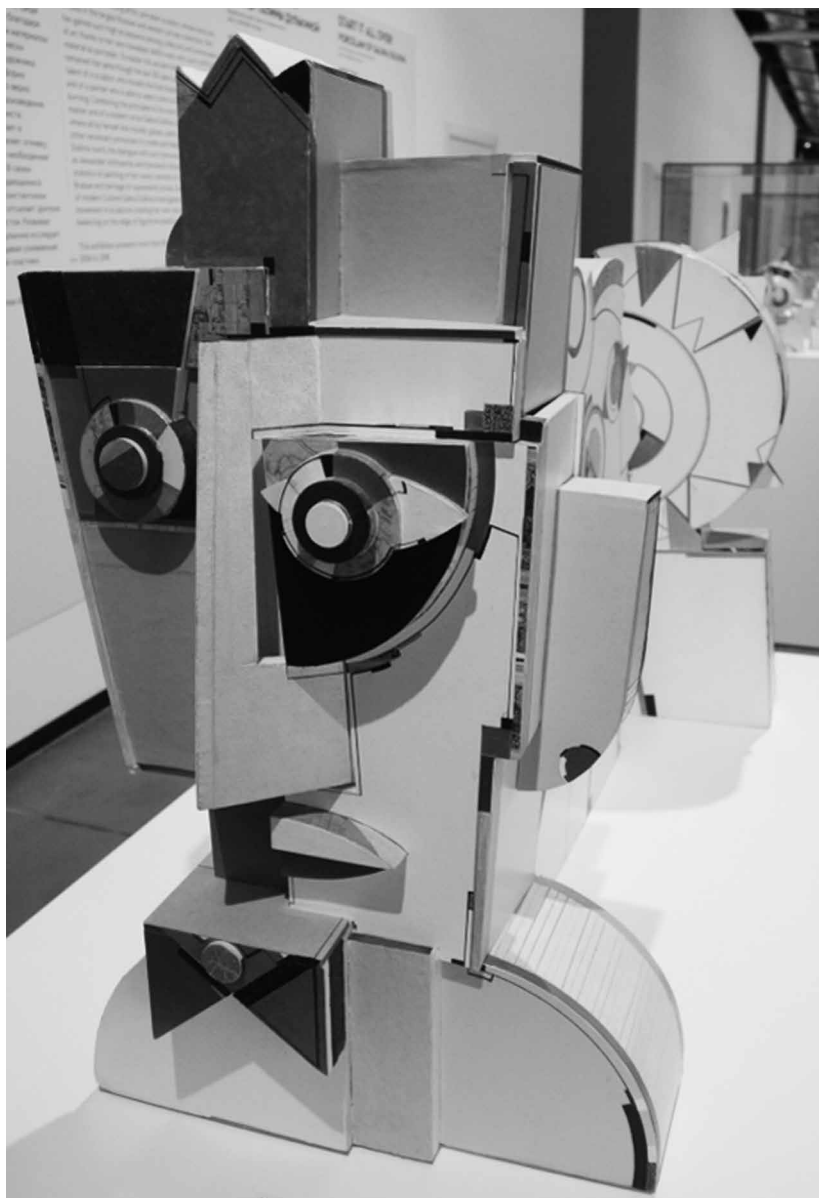
Today we often hear from young poets, artists, musicians that art helps them to understand, first, themselves, answer the questions: who am I? Where am I? What in me is independent from me? Pathos of self-consciousness, search of the identity and roots change the structure and contents of the works. The range of themes and genres becomes wider, an active search for new means of artistic expression goes on, and there is a going beyond species and genus specific. "Along with the archetypes of public accessible mythology, the images of purely personal myth creation gets born"<sup>7</sup>.

These features of easel forms of modern decorative plastics refracted in its own way in the porcelain sculpture of the graduate of the Stroganov Academy, affecting with freedom, boldness and originality of interpretation. At the heart of the sculptor's thoughts about the fate of the people of Israel, the spiritual experience and destiny of humankind is dialogical type of reflection. Man and his ongoing for centuries dialogue with God stands in the center of design and compositional structure of the work, which depicts a scene of Moses' dispute with God ("I am creating two figures, because my aim is to portray a dialogue", — from the explanatory note to the diploma project). Thus, the archetype receives an original iconographic interpretation.

Plastic language of forms also receives a universal character. "The theme, which I have selected is many centuries old, but I live now and I will talk about the eternal with modern language" — graduate says in the explaining note. Modern artistic language has a difficult branched root system and, as a consequence, — multivariate artistic development, resonating in the mass of different dialects generated by the sources of inspiration. And the ways, more specifically, the principles of construction of the form today, affect both existing modernist and postmodernist paradigms. "Do not try to teach shaping. Teach principles," — called F. — L. Wright.



6. Violinist. 2006. Porcelain. 36,7×20×11,5. The Pavel Teplukhin's collection



7. Long live the king! 2009. Collage. Mixed media. 72 × 41,5 × 12. Author's collection



8. Electrocontrabass. 2007. Porcelain. 35 × 19,5 × 12. The Pavel Teplukhin's collection

In the work, the influence of Suprematism comes to allusions. The principle of forming based on the character of the interpretation of the

source of inspiration, emotional coloring of decorative forms imparts features of postmodern imagery to the work. As if arbitrarily taken, “random” details or their parts, having clear geometric shape, or rounded “fluid” forms, are assembled easily and wittily, and mimetic scale this method of artistic expression can give place to the associative imagery. The very sculptural composition, its spatial drama is deeply sensed and understood as a field of emotional stress, expressed in a rush to one figure’s move to meet the other one. Bridging the distance between them is identical to the opening of secret, comprehension of the truth. Art porcelain aura associated with the sense of purity and joy of life, influences on the myth color, softening, harmonizing it. Thus was born the bright meaningful work, potentially loaded with interesting artistic ideas.

Presented in the exhibition at the Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center works of the next ten years reflect an active reflection, inspired by the entry in the context of contemporary art issues and searches, in which emphasizing of succession, forms of address to the heritage, the tone of aesthetic experience, the nature of the utterance and its vocabulary, and an attempt to update some aspects of these searches in china acquire the principal character. Successful results are surprising and encouraging.

If we open the book by French writer Michel Houellebecq “Map and territory”, devoted to the phenomena of artistic creation in modern world, we will see how originally the ideas of pop art and design aesthetics refract in it. The main character of this novel, young artist, cannot ignore machine world, in which he exists.

Just as once Fernand Leger, Galina “recreates” the world of material objects: in her sculpture we see a variety of apparatus, instruments, machine parts in a very different context, in a new artistic interpretation, emphasizing the perfection of parts processing or massiveness, brutality of form. It is in this vein that the author creates objects of her “space series”. Galina resorts to the expressive means, designed to reinforce the impression of apparatus fitness to the existence in space: from any angle, such an object looks compact, sleek, perfectly completed. Titles of the space series works are notable, they reveal Alexander Blok’s poetic images, Vassily Aksenov’s works and become a kind of reference

points in time: “We will hear the flight of all the planets” (2010—2011), “Halfway to the Moon” (2011), “Star ticket “(2013) in the viewer’s memory. These names enliven the past, associate generations.

In a series dedicated to musicians, the artist gives her plastic interpretation to relevant to the contemporary art problem of “conceptual metaphor” and its artistic expression in a porcelain sculpture. The focus of the author’s is on the search for ways of representing a visual image of an abstract notion of “music”. Metaphor of mastery becomes fusion of the musician and his instrument, their inseparability. To create a plastically convincing visual image author refers to the combinatorial design methodology, again freely, in an artistic way interpreting techniques of variant changes in volume-spatial, tectonic and decorative elements of the product structure. Sculptor with pleasure gives herself to the search for different figurative combinations, each time finding more ingenious solutions, showing inexhaustible imagination and artistry. Porcelain master perfects and varies her techniques in bulk forms (with glaze painting or without it), or deployed on a dish plane.

Game beginning, actively developing techniques of combinatorial forming peculiar not only to complete, but also carrying out at the present time works (the cycle “They read the Torah. Boro- Park”, 2016), which on the one hand give an idea about the characteristic features of modern style, on the other — have features of individual handwriting.

Some features of the art of our time existence make it necessary to identify relations, which are becoming more visible, changes the emphasis and bringing certain nuances in the works of young artists. Today, art is ambiguous, and it reacts differently to the new reality structure, to the challenges that the modernity addressed to the traditional culture. Wanting to be modern, the art offers a variety of sometimes conflicting versions of the responses to the challenge of time. In the space of contemporary culture or as it is now often referred to as “post cultural space” dominate and equally exist two artistic systems. One of them, faithful to the “eternal” values and recognizing the “eternal” laws, which were obtained from hundreds of years of creativity, based on the language of modernism, the so-called formal art. The other, which presents itself as a “contemporary art”, is an art-system, where



9. A clown rolling a boll. 2007. Porcelain. Overglaze painting. Gilding. 28×21,5×8. The Alexander Kaplan's collection

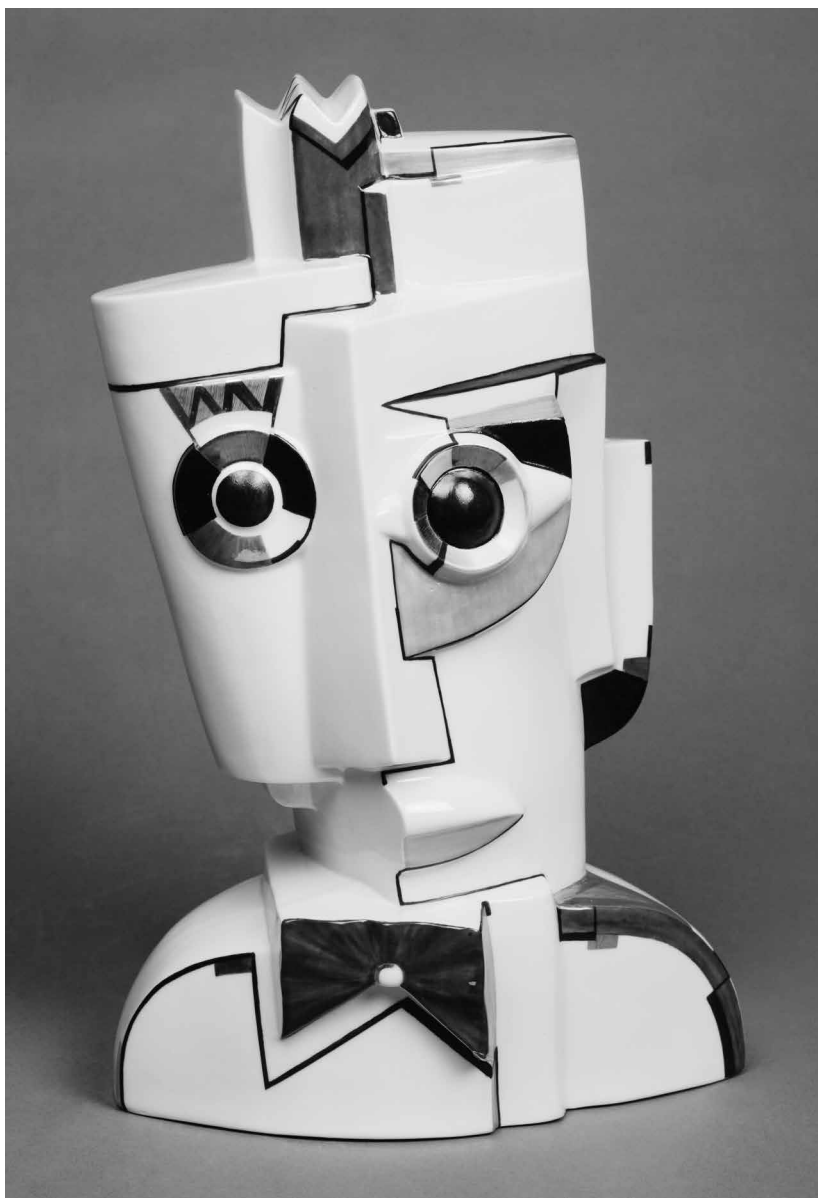
dominates the artistic gesture language. Both systems exist in parallel, as they were like different kinds of activities. When confronted, they are beginning to “spark”: in the border area one can observe curious phenomena, indicating, if not a dialogue, but something about its movements, clutches, random intersections, and thus the establishment of relations between the two languages, which culture uses. Probably, here open the opportunities to replenish the arsenal of means of artistic expression. More obvious also becomes the fact that actionism ceases to be the sphere dedicated to initiated: the experience of artistic practices critically interpreted and developed in different art forms. Borrowing is selective and superficial, which naturally irritates apologists and zealous guardians of the purity of the idea. But the process of assimilation and absorption can not be stopped.

Thanks to deep connection threads preserves natural affinity of works, artifacts and other kinds of artistic practices for all the dissimilarity of languages and articulations generated by different types of artistic thinking. We strive to find these threads to weave them into a single fabric of modern art canvas.

Similar pulses are felt in Galina Dulkina’s works. Influence of artistic practices can be seen in “operational” forms created by her in a collage technique. Collages are sculpture made by the author of different materials: foam board, colored or silver paper, newspaper (magazine) pages, paint. Occupying with a collage, a porcelain master is not bend to the technology: there is no firing, the results of which are not always predictable; there are no restrictions on the size of the work. Porcelain sculpture can be made of a large scale, but this requires a corresponding size and power of oven, that means a workshop must become a mini-factory. In addition, creating a large porcelain sculptures, the author usually pursues other goals.

But the most important thing, which will eventually explain a sculptor on to collage, is the need to expand the territory of the formal search, find more freedom, go beyond the traditional genre of decorative art. Bright grotesque images of her collages (“Rock of the city of Saint-Petersburg”, “Friend”, both 2010), made from scrap materials that imitates created by man “self-made” form, apparent to be simple and





10. King. 2015. Porcelain. Overglaze painting. Gilding. 29×18,2×10. Author's collection

fun fair diversity, attracting the attention of exhibition visitors, reducing the distance between the artist and the viewer.

Despite the fact that modern man is “full of the memory as the earth” (M. Voloshin), studying the art of today, it is impossible to pass by the artist’s relationship to tradition. As a child of the cultural heritage of the “thaw”, Galina follows its value orientations. She creates a series of works, saturated with allusions, evoking associations with the style of Russian avant-garde artifacts, exactly allusions, it means the hints thanks to which the imagery gets permeated with tone of bright memory and admiration (“Casimir”, 2008; “Postsuprematic egg on a stand”, 2009; “Vivat, king of suprematism”, 2009; dishes “Aphorism –1”, 2008; “Rocker”, 2009). The complex of formal methods applied here by the artist is a commentary on the work-message, addressed to the avant-garde, but pronounced with the language of contemporary art. Witty, eccentric color of this roll with the past looks like an excuse for its diversity and the mosaic of artistic expression, characteristic for the postmodernist lexicon — this bizarre mixture of different techniques, motifs, symbols and connotations. Subordinate this polyphony to the internal logic that can become a kind of direction to one wishing to penetrate the author’s intent — this is the most important task, which the modern artist solves. And the more successively he decides it, the more reason to say that he can be called a master.

One more source of inspiration and Galina’s interlocutor became Art Deco, which precedes the postmodernist aesthetics. Its influence is felt in the character of porcelain sculpture decoration: in pictorial thinness of imaginative motives, elegant careless composition decisions of one works (“Violinist”, 2006; “Clown”, 2008), or, on the contrary, in geometrized volumes, brittle lines of ornamental motives, contrast combinations of local colors — others (“Concord of the Jurassic period”, 2015; “Dragon”, 2015).

Inspired by the impressions of Art Deco porcelain sculpture “Case for Mesusa”<sup>8</sup>, without exaggeration can be named as one of the most successful of the author’s works. Porcelain sculpture, in which a ritual object is recreated, preserves its functional features: it is hollow, fit to fasten, a little bit elicited. The “body” of the case is a relief multi-

stepped volume, articulated with the longitudinal plain borders, which edges are accentuated by a broken line of geometric outlines. Two-colored painting is executed economically and strictly, emphasizing the silhouette lines, golden stamps and borders.

Reflections of a young porcelain artist, her exhibition and the collisions of contemporary artistic development focus as in a lenses on the personality of an artist. Today the talent more than ever lacks of what Okudzhava in the words “if only the thoughts were clear...”. The artist, which creative work became an object of our little research, represents a rare type of personality able to produce such an unprofitable “artistic product”, as bright and joyful harmony. It is not a distinct discourse on ethic or didactic contents of art. It goes on about the activated on a new turn of art development integrate processes, which can be realized in the creativity of such masters, who have an ability to create original models of artistic integration. Interests, methods and results of the sculptor’s work show that her movement and perspectives of further growth are in the course of precise direction. It rests only to wish Galina Dulkina continuation of a happy way in her profession of porcelain sculptor.

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## ENDNOTES

- 1 Barush Maurice, a member of the National Association of French experts. On Galina Dulkina's work // *Start over again! Galina Dulkina's Porcelain*. The exhibition catalog. Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center. M., 2016, pp.8—9
- 2 Maria Burganova, Honored Artist of Russia, member of the Russian Academy of Arts, Doctor of Arts. Galina Dulkina's New Cubism // *Ibid.* pp. 6—7
- 3 T. I. Dulkina (1931—2014), a recognized expert in the field of ceramic art, Ph.D., has served in the State Historical Museum for over 40 years.
- 4 From an interview with the correspondent of news agency "Oreanda — News" with the sculptor Galina Dulkina 20/07/2015
- 5 Astrakhantseva T. L. Tradition and innovation in contemporary Russian ceramics // Round table "Modern Russian pottery — styles, trends and directions". Organizer — Department of Decorative Arts of the Russian Academy of Arts, Department of Decorative and Folk Art, Research Institute of the Arts. Moscow. April 23, 2015
- 6 The line from Bryusov's poem "The world of the electron"
- 7 Astrakhantseva T. L. Not. work
- 8 Mezuzah — a folded piece of parchment with inscribed words of prayer on it. The parchment is inserted into the case, which is attached to the doorpost of Jewish homes.