

Scientific article

DOI 10.28995/2073-0101-2026-1-284-297

For citation

Ananiev, Vitaly G. (2026). M. S. Kagan's book "On Applied Art. Some Theoretical Issues" (1961), on the sociocultural context of the text, Based on materials from the Central State Archive of Literature and Art in St. Petersburg, Herald of an Archivist, no. 1, pp. 284-297. DOI 10.28995/2073-0101-2026-1-284-297

Ananyev, Vitaly G., A. I. Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia, St. Petersburg, Russian Federation

M. S. Kagan's 1961 book "On Applied Art. Some Theoretical Questions": On the Sociocultural Context of the Text. Based on materials from the Central State Archive of Literature and Art in St. Petersburg

Abstract

The study of the history of everyday Soviet life in the post-war period is a pressing area in contemporary historiography. Researchers employ various methods and approaches to analyzing this phenomenon. This article attempts to expand the source base for such research. As a source for the history of everyday Soviet life in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the author analyzes the monograph "On Applied Art: Some Theoretical Issues" by M. S. Kagan, a renowned Russian specialist in aesthetics, theory, and philosophy of culture, published in 1961 by the "Artist of the RSFSR" publishing house. The author draws on materials from the Central State Archive of Literature and Art in St. Petersburg, which have previously received little attention from researchers. These are files from the collection of the "Artist of the RSFSR" publishing house, as well as materials from a discussion of M. S. Kagan's book at a joint meeting of the Criticism and Art Criticism Section and the Decorative and Applied Arts Section of the Leningrad Branch of the Union of Soviet Artists of the RSFSR on June 6, 1962. The history of M. S. Kagan's text is examined within the conceptual framework of the "chamber propaganda plan" paradigm, understood as a set of measures and initiatives that largely determined the specifics of everyday life and the logic of organizing the living environment of Soviet citizens during the period under review. Analyzing the book's content, the context of its publication, and its reception by the professional community, the author identifies a specific moment in the stylistic transition from the lush late Stalinist "triumph" style to the much more intimate and minimalist "new style" of the Thaw, commensurate with the life of the individual. However, this transition (like M. S. Kagan's text) is not examined from an art historical perspective, but rather as markers of changes in the realm of Soviet everyday life. Kagan's use of specific quotes from N. S. Khrushchev's speeches in his text allows us to connect this stylistic transition with the new tenets of Soviet policy. The author of the book links the problem of artistic image in applied art to the changing strategies of "chamber propaganda" during the transition from late Stalinism to the Thaw era. Thus, the article emphasizes the heuristic potential of materials on the history of domestic applied/industrial art as sources for the history of Soviet everyday life in the 1950s and 1960s. The relevance of applied art theory is viewed as directly linked to the relevance of the new state policy, and the seemingly abstract problems of

image organization in art are seen as influencing the specifics of chamber propaganda, which shaped the culture of Soviet citizens during the Thaw period.

Keywords

History of everyday life, Soviet everyday life, decorative and applied arts, chamber propaganda plan, formation of the living environment, M.S. Kagan, Thaw.

Download the article: [ananiev_doi](#)

References

Vinokurov, S. E., Budrina, L. A. (2023). The Myth of Space. Interpretation in Ural Precious Stone of the 1950s–1980s, *Studia Slavica et Balcanica Petropolitana*, No. 2, pp. 187-199.

Ioffe, I. I. (1932). *New Style*, Moscow; Leningrad, Izogiz publ., 156 p.

Ioffe, I. I. (1937). *Synthetic Study of Art and Sound Cinema*, Leningrad, State Music Research Institute publ., 412 p.

Kagan, M. S. (1961). *On Applied Art. Some Theoretical Questions*, Leningrad, Khudozhnik RSFSR publ., 160 p.

Kagan, M. S. (1956). On the Essence and Specificity of Applied Art, *Iskusstvo*, No. 1, pp. 16–21.

Nikonov, S. B. (Ed.) (2007). *The World of St. Petersburg Culture, In Memory of M. S. Kagan*. IN: *Proceedings of the Scientific and Practical Conference, May 18–19, 2006, St. Petersburg, St. Petersburg State University publ.*, 267 p.

Nekrasova-Karateeva, O. L., Stepanova, D. G. (2024). Leonid Karateyev and the Role of the Decorative and Applied Arts Combine in the Formation of the Artistic Environment of Leningrad, *University Scientific Journal*, No. 82, pp. 98–102.

Royfe, A. B. (2016). M. S. Kagan and His School, The Personality of the Scholar in the Context of the Development of the Humanities, *Bulletin of Culture and Arts*, No. 2 (46), pp. 79–89.

Sapanzha, O. S. (2023). Morphology of the Material World from the Late 1940s to the Mid-1960s and the "Chamber Propaganda Plan" in the Works of Leningrad Art Industry Enterprises, *Studia Slavica et Balcanica Petropolitana*, No. 2, pp. 149–168.

Sapanzha, O. S., Stepanova, D. G. (2024). Development of the Leningrad Art Industry and the Problem of Stylistic Transition. IN: *The Art Industry of Leningrad 1945–1965, Morphology and Morphemics, Collective Monograph*, St. Petersburg, NP-Print publ., pp. 55–66.

Shirokovskikh, M. S. (2023). Morphology and Mythology of Leningrad Textiles, *Studia Slavica et Balcanica Petropolitana*, No. 2, pp. 169-186.

Karpova, Y. (2020). *Comradely objects, Design and material culture in Soviet Russia, 1960s–80s*, Manchester, UK, Manchester University publ., 232 p.

About authors

Ananiev Vitaly G., Doctor of Cultural Studies, the Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia, department of art history and pedagogy of arts, professor, Saint-Petersburg, Russia, vgananev@herzen.spb.ru

Grant information

The article has been prepared with financial support of the Russian Science Fund (no. 23-18-00419) "The enterprises of the art industry in Leningrad in the 1940–1960s and their role in formation of the living environment": <https://grant.rscf.ru/site/user/bids?role=master>

The article was received in the editorial office on 27.12.2024, recommended for publication on 20.12.2025.

You can read completely article in the russian historic-archival magazine “The Herald of an Archivist”. Read more about terms of subscription [here](#) .

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