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New documents on the biography of the Toropets artist Gavril Lokhov, the second half of the 18th century

Abstract

The source study focuses on the little-known Toropets artist Gavril Maksimov, son of Lokhov. The article introduces archival documents that clarify Gavril Lokhov's biography within the context of the cultural heritage of Toropets in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The city, located on the southwestern spurs of the Valdai Hills, is a cultural phenomenon with architectural, documentary, and artistic richness, yet remains understudied in specialized literature. Through the prism of G. M. Lokhov's biography, the specifics of the local artistic milieu are demonstrated: a synthesis of folk traditions, church commissions, academic

influences, and connections with the elite, including Admiral G. G. Kushelev, who was elected an honorary amateur of the Imperial Academy of Arts (IAA). For the first time, several documents from the collections of the Russian State Historical Archive, the State Archive of the Tver Region, and the Central State Archive of Literature and Art of St. Petersburg are published and analyzed in a comprehensive manner: Lokhov's petition to the Imperial Academy of Arts from October 1786 describing his experience of painting a church in the Kholm'sky District (1784) and requesting a certificate following criticism from the abbot of the Velikolutsky Monastery; the decision of the council of the Imperial Academy of Arts from October 31, 1786 and the report of 1788 on the examination of four biblical paintings and the tasks of the adjunct rector, which confirmed the master's "sufficient knowledge"; two petitions from July 4, 1792 to the Toropets Magistrate for the status of an eminent citizen with an attached academic certificate; A 1919 inventory of the Gatchina Palace mentions the ceiling painting «Apollo and the Nine Muses» (58.5 ? 108 cm) for the Marble Dining Room, lost between 1941 and 1944. It reconstructs the path of G. M. Lokhov, from a self-taught artist who risked a ban after criticizing the abbot for his images in the Koptevo Church (1784) to a recognized master with an academic certificate used for social advancement. The attribution of the Gatchina ceiling painting (confirmed by the 1919 inventory of the Council of People's Commissars and watercolors by E. Hau) refutes the cliché of "icon painter," revealing a mastery of mythological iconography, ceiling painting techniques, and knowledge of anatomy, all of which suggest a high level of education. G. M. Lokhov was the mentor of the restorer A. F. Mitrokhin, clarifying the origins of the Hermitage school of restoration. This study fills gaps in regional art studies, demonstrating the value of «secondary» archives for the biographies of provincial artists and patronage networks. These documents stimulate the study of local traditions and little-known figures in Russian painting.

Keywords

A. F. Mitrokhin, G. M. Lokhov, biography, painting, biblical subjects, mythological iconography, ceiling painting technique, Gatchina, Toropets, Imperial Academy of Arts.

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