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COLLECTION OF PHOTOS AS A SOURCE FOR CREATION OF ORIGINAL PROJECTS

Abstract

Since the foundation of the Russian State Art Library (1922) the iconographic materials collection has been regularly replenished by various private archives and collections including a lot of photographs.

The article attempts to summarize the work on using photos in scientific, exhibition activities and publishing.

Keywords: photo, RSAL, exhibition, opera, theater, Moscow Art Theater School, Bakhchisaray, Shakespeare Festival, Chaliapin, Sherling, Petipa, daguerreotype

The Russian State Art Library (RSAL) is the only one that specializes in collecting literature about art. In addition to the main book collection the library has kept and constantly replenished, from the very beginning, the artworks which include the following collections: printed graphics, original graphics (sketches by theater artists and filmmakers), photographs, postcards, and also a small collection of applied graphics.

The photo collection is stored in Iconographic Department and has about 80 thousand of units: photographs that come to the library from a variety of sources –mostly from private collections. The biggest part of the collection is theatrical photographs.

Photography is an important source of historical and visual information, and to use all the informative opportunities that a photo can provide, it is necessary to conduct additional researches. A photograph always needs comments – the most complete and accurate comments increase the scientific value of the document and improve its visual perception.

It is necessary to highlight three lines of activities of the library, where collection of photos is an important part:

- visual and information support of the topic at the request of students for creative universities (visual and information services of the educational process);
- exhibition activity;
- publishing activity.

There is a short story about the appeal of the photos to the educational process of the students for the Stage Costume Department, using the example of Moscow Art Theater School. Since 1989 the library has cooperated with Stage Costume Departments which prepares costumes for artists. Teachers of the costume history and composition who are the acting artists themselves conduct their classes at the library, which provides them with iconographic materials including photographs for their work. Books, albums and fashion magazines give a variety of materials for studying the history of the costume, but the photo has got some advantage - in the photos we see people who lived in real time and dressed in accordance with their personal taste and individual abilities. You can also see a lot of interesting features and details. You can see from one image to another how on one side silhouettes, ornaments and accessories repeat themselves, and on the other side they are sometimes subtly different; how a suit of one person emphasizes his advantages and a similar silhouette of another one's highlights the shortcomings. When the artist works with archival materials he is immersed in the studied epoch, and the more diverse, the deeper immersion takes place.

Archive materials for creating a character are also used by actors. Every year in the library there are classes for American students of International Moscow Art Theater School who are trained in acting skills. These classes are devoted to working

with Chekhov's plays and students have an opportunity to understand the world of Chekhov's heroes better. Looking through a lot of images, a future actor, with the help of a teacher, gains the material that is necessary for the work, in order to embody his character in accordance with the concept of the director and the artist of the play.

Let us pass to the exhibition activity – one of the priority lines of business at this step of the existence of libraries.

An exhibition at the library is one of the most popular forms of working with readers. For many years the RSAL has realized creative ideas. The main purpose of them is the disclosure and demonstration of the library's collections in various aspects. Photographs often significantly complement the exposition and can even radically change the general impression of it. At some exhibitions the photo is an adornment of the exposition.

The concept of the exhibition with using photographs and the way they are presented at the exhibition is a new creative task that the curators will have to solve. Sometimes a photograph is the starting point and it gives a premise for an idea or a story that always has a chance to be realized.

There are some projects the library has realized for the last several years.

One of them is the exhibition "Monuments of Bakhchisaray in the camera lens, the 1910s". The development of the concept of this exposition began with the study of seventy-seven photos with the views and monuments of Bakhchisaray (the Crimea) and scenes from the lives of its inhabitants – the Crimean Tatars; photos were taken in the 1910s by a group of researchers headed by the creator of the Bakhchisaray Museum. The library fund received the photos as part of the archive of its first director. Studying the photographs led to the idea of creating an exposition dedicated to the ethnographic expedition to Bakhchisaray. A specialist of the Moscow Polytechnic Museum examined the appearance of prints and images and identified the models of photographic devices that could be used for taking these photographs – similar cameras were included in the exposition (provided by the Moscow Polytechnic Museum).

Now a few words about the prints. They are square photos, about 9 by 9 cm in size. Copies of were made for the exposition. Some of the original prints were also shown at the exhibition.

The Photo's collection of the RSAL is collected considering a variety of possible demands in the sphere of art and it gives opportunities for interaction between cultural institutions. One example of such successful cooperation is the exhibition "Leafing through an old album ... F.Chaliapin and his contemporaries in photographs by M. Sherling", which was held in Chaliapin's memorial estate in Moscow. the RSAL is the owner of a collection of more than one hundred and thirty portraits of people active in the worlds of culture and art taken by M. Sherling.

Twenty-three portraits of F. Chaliapin were selected for this exposition. They impress the best of the images he created – Don Quixote, Boris Godunov, Don Basilio, Mephistopheles, Salieri.

A few words need to be said about the master of portrait photography M. Sherling, whose art consisted of a special reception of filming. The photographer studied at the Munich Academy of Light Painting. When he returned to St. Petersburg, he worked at “The Sun of Russia” – the best illustrated magazine of that time. “The magazine printed portraits of people active in the worlds of Russian culture and art. Portraits of F.I. Shalyapin, taken by Sherling became illustrations of the anniversary edition of 1913, dedicated to the 20th anniversary of the operatic career of the famous bass. Ten shots of the great artist were taken by Sherling for this issue.”¹

The creativity of this master is significant in the Russian history of the art of photography, so the collection will always be in demand. This collection is presented in the database of the RSAL. However, the collection contains portraits of unknown persons, and one of the tasks for curators and researchers is their attribution.

One interesting example of international cooperation between cultural and educational institutions is the exhibition “Hamlet: 100 Years on the Russian Stage” prepared by Russian State Art Library for the Royal Conservatory in Glasgow in the framework of the Shakespeare Festival dedicated to the 450th anniversary of W. Shakespeare’s birth / the 400th anniversary of his death. The festival was being held during 2014 – 2016 in the cities of different countries. The idea of this exposition was to present the great variety of performances of the play “Hamlet” on the stage of Moscow musical and drama theaters as well as to present the works of theater directors of several generations have been made for the last hundred years. Starting from the world-famous master Gordon Craig, who staged the play at Moscow Art Theater in 1911, to the creator of Taganka Theater Yuri Lyubimov, who staged a legendary performance with V. Vysotsky as Hamlet. To create the exposition, they made copies of photographs from the theatre play photo collection. And the exposition began to emerge together with the main library fund. The exhibition introduced the audience to the performances of such world-famous theaters as Moscow Art Theater, Taganka Theater, Lenkom Theater, Satirikon Theater, Theater on the South-West, etc.

Turning to the publishing activity of the library, it is necessary to highlight the following edition of the RSAL - a collection of essays called *From the History of Russian Photography*, which were written on the basis of documentary materials. The collection appeared thanks to the collaboration of the library with the historian of photography A.P. Popov, who gave a course of lectures, which became the basis

1 Попов А.П. *Из истории российской фотографии* / А.П. Попов ; Российская государственная библиотека искусств. – Москва : Издательство Московского университета, 2010. – С. 195–196.

for this publication. As illustrations to the essays there were, among other things, photos from the RSAL's collection. Since this edition contains a wide range of reference materials (starting from the essay about the first steps of the light painting to the essay about the size of the formats of negative materials and photographic papers and photographic prints), it is claimed by specialists who are involved in the study of collection of photos and the history of photography.

The RSAL took a part in the All-Russian project Union catalog "The Daguerreotype in Russia". The project was developed and prepared by the State Museum and Exhibition Center ROSPHOTO under the program for the preservation of photographs in the state collections of the Russian Federation. The RSAL's collection has three daguerreotypes, which were received from private collections. They were stored without attention of specialists for a long time. In 2003 daguerreotypes were identified and then restored because they had a number of damages. In the process of restoration, daguerreotypes got an exposition look, the clarity of the image was restored. A scientific description of the daguerreotypes was compiled and published in a catalog.

The study of another collection, which is stored in the library as "Petipa's Photo archive", and the article about it, made information about these documents available and attracted a number of researchers to the library. The photographs that make up this collection illustrate the history of one family branch of French and Russian choreographer Marius Ivanovich Petipa. The collection is valuable because it presents rare photographs that reflect the private life of some members of the family of this famous choreographer. It is necessary to mention one of the requests received after the article about the collection was published. It is the request from the House of Humanities Aquitaine (Bordeaux) asking the RSAL to provide with some photos of the Petipa family for the publication as an illustrative series for M. Petipa's diaries. The publication will see the light of day soon. It will be the first edition of his diaries in the original language – French.

A recent success in the sphere of the library publishing activities consisted in a release of a set of postcards with views of Bakhchisaray, timed to the opening of the exposition, which was mentioned above. The set has 20 postcards accompanied by a small text dedicated to museum and research activities that took place in Bakhchisaray in 1920s. These photos from the RSAL's collection have historical value and are published for the first time. The peculiarity of this publication is in the fact that the small format of original prints allowed to publish them in real size.

Using the photos stored in the RSAL for exhibition activities, publications in various scientific and popular scientific digests, albums, for creating postcards, and any other publishing products is one of the important ways to draw the attention of specialists and researchers to the library's funds. By means of exhibition and publishing activities, the library performs an enlightening function, positioning itself as a participant in the process of cultural development. Recording the exist-

tence of the document in the union catalogs (Russian and international) enhances the status of the document. The photo becomes not just an image or auxiliary material. It becomes an object of cultural heritage that has historical and artistic value, a full-fledged subject of independent expositions, which requires attentive careful handling and creating of special storage conditions.

In this paper there are some of the most successful examples of using the photo collection in the Library activities, and we hope that further work in this direction will lead to the replenishment of this list.



[Tomb's portal Esky-dyurbe (15th century)]. [1910s]. Gelatin silver print ; 8,8x8,9 cm RSAL Inv. № ф18827



[Mekhmed II Geray's dyurbe (16th century) in Esky-Yurt]. [1910s]. Gelatin silver print ; 9,1x8,9 cm RSAL Inv. № ф18832



Sherling M. [The portraits of F. Chaliapin as Don Quixote in opera "Don Quixote" by G. Massenet]. [1913]. Gelatin silver print ; 18x12,7 cm RSAL Inv. № ф7867



Goryachev K. [The portraits of V. Avilov as Hamlet. South-West Theatre. Moscow. Directed by Valeri Belyakovich. 1998]. Moscow, 1998. 15x22,5 cm RSAL Inv. № ф4768



Abadie, Martin. [Portrait of a young woman]. Moscow, [1850s]. Daguerreotype; 6,6x5,4 (mat window); 12,2x10,5 (in package) cm RSAL Inv. № 40645



Bergamasco, Ch. [Portrait of M. Petipa, a choreographer]. St. Petersburg, [1870s]. Albumen cabinet card; 16x10,8 cm RSAL Inv. № ф7549



Bergamasco, Ch. [Portrait of L. Savitskaya, his wife]. St. Petersburg, [188-?]. Albumen cabinet card; 16,2x11,1 (print); 16,2x11,1 (card) cm RSAL Inv. № ф7664