



THE EVOLUTION OF RUSSIAN AND SOVIET REALISM, FOCUSING ON VARIOUS GENERATIONS OF ARTISTS AND THE POST-SOVIET ERA.

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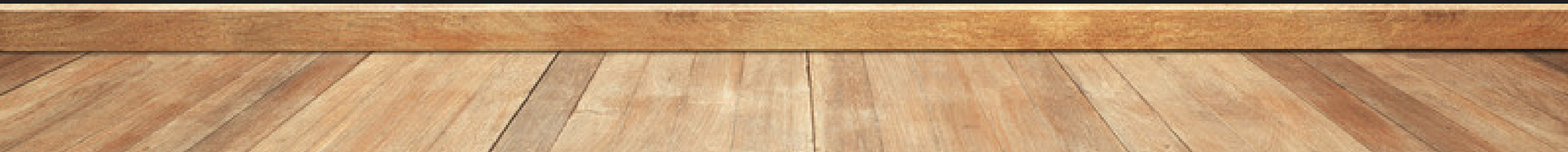
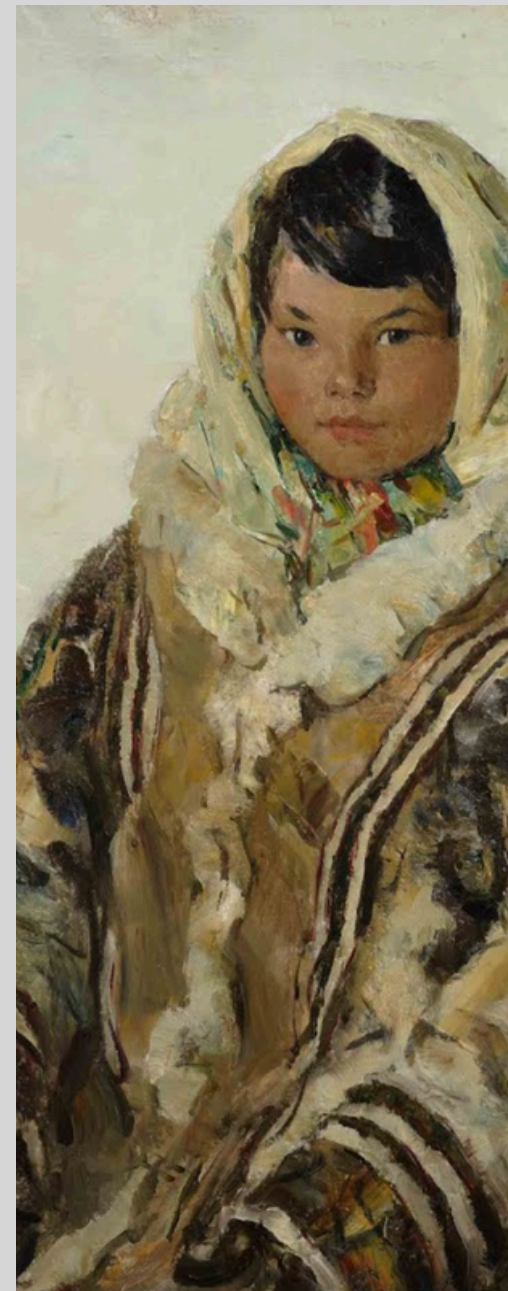




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Russian Realism

Definition

Rooted in academic traditions, this style was known for technical rigor in painting, highlighting everyday life, landscapes, and portraits.

The "Wanderers" group, including painters like Ilya Repin, focused on national themes and social critique.

Themes

Often dealt with the "woman question," the peasant experience, the failings of the bureaucracy, and the search for meaning in a changing Russia.



The Wanderers (Peredvizhniki)

is group of Russian realist artists who formed an artists' cooperative in protest of academic restrictions; it evolved into the Society for Travelling Art Exhibitions, in short Peredvizhniks, in 1870



Barge Haulers on the Volga (1870–1873).

The Wanderers (Peredvizhniki)



Morning in the Pine Forest - Ivan Shishkin

What happens when the government decides what art should look like?

- Realism in Russia didn't just depict life.
- It shaped national identity.
- It became a political tool.
- And it survived the collapse of an empire.





Socialist Realism

State Propaganda
Idealized workers, leaders
Enforced optimism, joy
State commission
Public, official



Russian Realism

Personal expression
Real life, family, landscapes
Full spectrum of human emotion
Artist's personal vision
Private, often hidden



Do not Lean - Erik Bulatov

Post-Soviet Realism

the sudden collapse of a singular national identity.



The "Aesthetic of Decay" (Chernukha)
Chernukha—a focus on the darkest, grittiest parts of post-Soviet life.



Post-Soviet countries started looking for their identity, increasingly romanticizing their ethnic backgrounds to regain it.



In 2026, Russia remains a global center for classical academic realism. Unlike many Western institutions that shifted toward conceptual art, Russian academies continue to enforce a rigorous 18th-century "academic method" involving years of intensive training in anatomy, perspective, and oil painting.

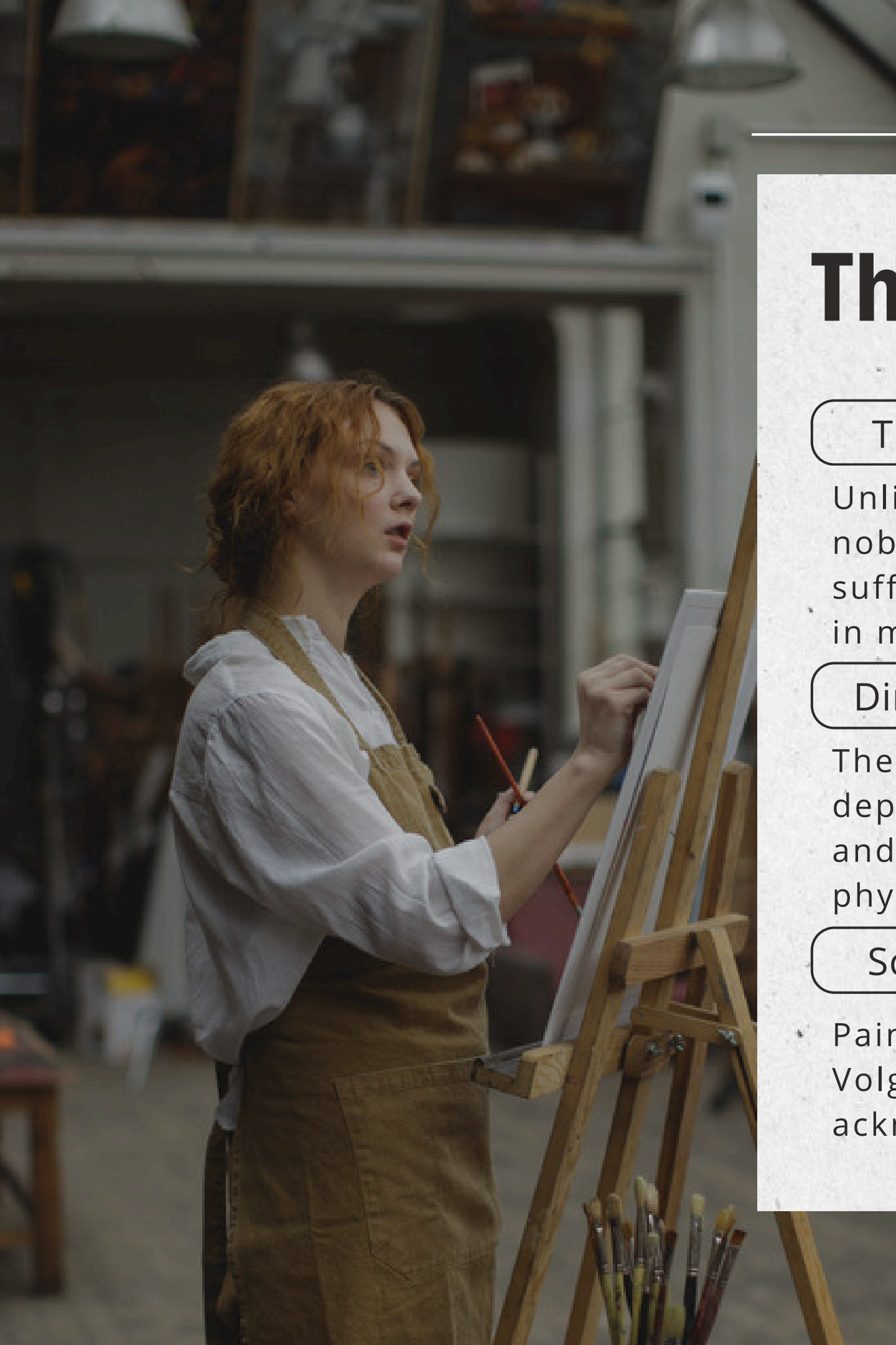
Post-Soviet Realism



Kazakhstan

We've seen how Realism was a weapon for the Russian rebels, a mask for Soviet dictators, and a playground for Post-Soviet ironists. But in Kazakhstan, we see Realism's most noble form: A way to reclaim a stolen identity.



A woman with red hair, wearing a white shirt and brown overalls, is painting on a canvas mounted on an easel. She is holding a paintbrush and looking intently at her work. The background is a dimly lit studio with various art supplies and framed paintings visible on shelves.

The Techniques of Russian Realism

The "Psychological Gaze"

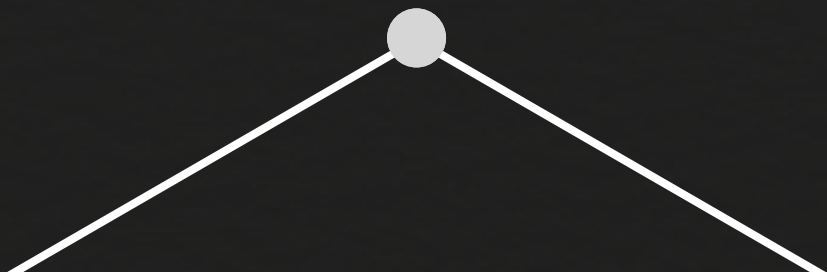
Unlike Western European portraiture that often made people look noble, Russian Realists focused on the eyes to convey internal suffering or moral conflict. They often painted people mid-thought or in moments of private grief.

Dirty Textures & Earthy Palettes

They moved away from the bright, "clean" colors of the Academy. To depict the life of a peasant, they used "muddy" tones—browns, greys, and ochres—to make the viewer feel the dust, the cold, and the physical weight of the environment.

Scale for the Commoner

Painting regular, struggling people (like Repin's Barge Haulers on the Volga) on a massive, epic scale. This forced the viewer to acknowledge the "small" person as a monumental figure.



Links

<https://lazaregallery.com/blog/russian-realism-socialist-realism>

https://www.youtube.com/shorts/uDrPP7Skq_0

Thank You!

