

so much as the artist's conception of the form in which Zeus would have to be presented if he were to be made visible.

In a very original chapter Mathew explains (pp. 23–37) the relation of Byzantine art to Greek mathematics, and gives an excellent summary of the Byzantine theology of the use of icons, in which, among other things, he rightly repudiates the notion that an image was considered to be a magical counterpart of the prototype and had a magical identity with it (p. 104).

Of great interest is Mathew's treatment of the Byzantine use of color, and the twenty-three plates he has chosen are both apposite and eminently satisfactory in themselves. In short, this is a most remarkable volume, which deserves careful study. I recommend it enthusiastically to both laymen and Byzantinists.

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LEON BAKST. By *Charles Spencer*. London: Academy Editions, 1973. Illustrated. 248 pp. \$40.00. Distributed by St. Martin's Press, New York.

The last decade has witnessed a strong revival of interest in the choreographic and scenic achievements of Russian ballet, culminating in the celebrations associated with the centenary in 1972 of Sergei Diaghilev's birth. Once again the artistic importance of designers who worked with him, such as Anisfeld, Bakst, Bilibin, Goncharova, Larionov, and Iakulov, has been widely acknowledged. It is opportune, therefore, that Mr. Spencer presents us with a book that concentrates on perhaps the most histrionic of the ballet artists—Lev Samoilovich Bakst. Although as a pioneer study the book has more value for the layman than the specialist (leaving unanswered many questions of Bakst's artistic and "philosophical" evolution), it does serve as a preview of more exacting analyses, not least the Soviet monograph scheduled for publication in 1967–77.

The book is a chronological biography which encompasses the artist's childhood and education, his association with the World of Art group, his professional and personal relations with Diaghilev, and his independent work after their rupture in 1917. The biography, however, lacks new data, a failing which could have been rectified by recourse to Soviet and Western archives, many of which are now accessible. Patient examination of such sources, or even of Russian and Soviet publications pertaining to Russian art of the early twentieth century (the bibliography covers only Western titles), would have shed light on the still umbrageous questions of Bakst's teaching experience at the Zvantseva art school in St. Petersburg, his relationship with Viacheslav Ivanov and with the *Apollon* circle, and his work on *intérieurs* for St. Petersburg villas. In particular, the book lacks a clear perspective on the World of Art group as it existed both in Russia (1898–1906, 1910–24) and in Paris (1920s). A lengthier account of basic ideas within the framework of the World of Art—its passion for antiquity and the neoclassical era, its general emphasis on the decorative and applied arts and on technical mastery, and its alliance with Symbolist writers—would have done much to explain why Bakst developed as he did and why, in turn, his stage designs were at once so innovative and so successful. The sections which deal with the ballet productions themselves are comprehensive, though they also rely on known material. On the other hand, the chapters "Ida Rubinstein" and "Woman, Fashion, and Decoration" are of the utmost value and expose aspects of Bakst's creative career previously

neglected. The new illustrative and documentary material is especially welcome in the context of the Evergreen Theater in Baltimore.

More important than the text are the many good quality color and monochrome illustrations of works, several of which have not been reproduced before. Although more space might have been given to Bakst's early oils and graphics and to his book designs, his sensuous costume and set designs with their "exaggeration, the tendency to push everything as far as they could go and a little further" convince us of that profound sense of theater which Bakst possessed. This visual hyperbole, as it were, identifiable with pieces such as the Bacchante in *Narcisse*, the Sultanas in *Schéhérazade*, or Nijinsky's costume in *Le Spectre de la Rose*, arises not only from Bakst's combination of lavish colors but also from a supreme tension and mobility generated by the folds, veils, feathers, pendants, and so forth. It was in this idea of allowing the costume to extend and express the bodily movement that Bakst, for example, anticipated a guiding principle of fashion design in the 1920s and beyond.

The sumptuous illustrations testify once again to the originality and productivity of Bakst's artistic genius and to his appreciable influence on many aspects of twentieth-century stage design. Bakst said once: "I would like to be the most famous artist in the world." Yearning for a sensuous excess, the audiences of the world's capitals breathed deeply the perfume of Bakst's exotic fantasies and, for a brief moment, at the height of the Decadent era, his wish was granted. Now that our historical cycle has returned to an orbit of extreme sensibility, Spencer's book should sell well.

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DIE SOWJETISCHE POLITIK AUF DEM GEBIET DER BILDENDEN KUNST VON 1917 BIS 1934. By Hans-Jürgen Drengenberg. FORSCHUNGEN ZUR OSTEUROPÄISCHEN GESCHICHTE, vol. 16. Osteuropa-Institut an der Freien Universität Berlin, Historische Veröffentlichungen. Berlin: Otto Harrassowitz, 1972. 423 pp. Paper.

This is a careful, meticulously detailed investigation of the development of the plastic arts in the Soviet Union from the Revolution to the imposition in 1934 on all artistic endeavors of the "precepts" and norms associated with the term "socialist realism." As an introduction to his research Herr Drengenberg provides a brief, well-informed statement on those modernist tendencies in all the arts which came into prominence in Russia in the early twentieth century and which continued to exert some influence in the twenties during Lunacharsky's tenure in the Commissariat of Public Education. He provides also a brief discussion of Marxist ideas on art and literature in which he demonstrates conclusively (it has been done before, but no matter) that there never was, and perhaps in the nature of things cannot be, a Marxist "aesthetic" (pp. 51-112). He traces carefully that dismal Soviet ideological enterprise—connected largely with the name (*nebezvzvestnyi*) of Mikhail Lifshits—aimed at fabricating out of fragmentary statements of Marx, Engels, and, later, Lenin, some kind of authoritative aesthetic doctrine. We find also, on the other hand, a revealing study of Lunacharsky both as a writer on art problems and as the commissar directly involved in much of the art activity of the twenties.

The main body of Drengenberg's work is a detailed examination of the Soviet