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# The Portrait of the Grand Duchess Elena Pavlovna in her childhood by Dmytro Levytsky

## Портрет великої княжни Олени Павлівни в дитинстві роботи Дмитра Левицького

**Abstract.** The aim of the article is to clarify the attribution of the portrait of Grand Duchess Elena Pavlovna in her childhood by an outstanding Ukrainian artist Dmytro Levytsky. The issue of expert attribution of the work from the collection of the Kyiv Picture Gallery National Museum is specified.

The creative manner of D. Levytsky has been analyzed, his technique of an artistic portraying of the person and his authorship has been proved. The emphasis was made on artist's approach to plastic modeling, processing light, shadowing, coloring, and glazing. The change in the name of the portrait is justified, given the well-known iconography of the daughters of Paul I—the Grand Duchesses Alexandra, Elena, Maria and Catherine.

Portrait images of the Romanov gallery, presented in Ukrainian art collections, now require a thorough study and refinement of attribution, since during the last 100 years they were on the periphery of domestic art studies. In this connection, the inheritance of the national artist Dmytro Levytsky, the son of the prominent Ukrainian engraver of the Baroque era, Grygory Levytsky-Nos, is especially important. A comprehensive analysis of the portrait of the Grand Duchess Elena Pavlovna from the Kyiv Picture Gallery National Museum confirms the affiliation of Dmitry Levytsky's paintings.

**Keywords:** child portrait, Ukraine, XVII–XVIII centuries, Dmytro Levytsky.

**Problem statement.** Recently, special attention in the sense of studying the fashion of the Baroque has been paid to the costume of the establishment. The fashion of the aristocrats of Poland, Ukraine and Russia during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was somewhat similar, since it first grasped European tendencies in clothing, and secondly, these territories were in very close intercourse and were periodically under one crown. Thus, domestic artists often worked with models of neighboring ethnic lands, which is why today in the treasury of Ukrainian art we have interesting examples of portraits of the Russian-Polish-Ukrainian elite. An interesting example in this regard is the child's portrait of the Grand Duchess Alexandra Pavlovna by Dmytro Levytsky, a work from the collection of the Kyiv Picture Gallery National Museum, which in fact represents another model—Elena Pavlovna.

**Analysis of recent research works and publications.** 1902 marked the start of the scientific study of the creative heritage by the famous Ukrainian artist Dmytro Levytsky. Conducted by V. Horlenko, a long-term researcher of the artist's work, the material was completed and published in the form of an illustrated album-monograph by the author-compiler S. Diagilev [6]. In 1916 the Russian

researcher O. Skvortsov in his book *D. G. Levytsky 1785–1822* (in Russian) clarified a number of facts from the artist's life and creative biography [10]. In 1930, I. Chukin's book *Ukrainian painting. Dmytro Levytsky* [11] was published, in which the author substantiated the idea that the artist's heritage belongs to Ukrainian art.

In 1939, a scientific discussion about the artist's national belonging to Russia or Ukraine was continued by K. Kuzminskiy in his work *F. S. Rokotov, D. G. Levytsky. Development of Russian Portrait Painting of the XVIII Century* (in Russian) [8]. In 1946 another monograph on the artist was published by G. Zhidkov [7]. The author tried to trace the specifics of the stylistics of the works of the artist, although he reduced it mainly to realism. First big monograph about D. Levitskiy by N. Moleva became her landmark work in 1960, where she tried to reconstruct the historical preconditions of the phenomenon of his artistic creativity. The second edition was published in the 1980s.

In 1961, in the 7<sup>th</sup> volume (of 13) of the *History of Russian Art* by I. Grabar, who studied works of the artist for a long time, gave the legacy of D. Levytsky a separate place [4]. In 1964 N. Gershenzon-Chegodavaeva published a monograph on the artist, in which two lists of works of the paint-

er are presented—hers on 186 portraits and I. Grabar's—on 180 portraits [3]. In 1968, some additional information to the work by previous scholars was published in the monograph by N. Voronina [2]. In 1987, to commemorate the artist's 250<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary, an exhibition of all his famous works was organized, based on which the complete catalog of the heritage of the painter was published. It contained the results of the technical and technological expertise and articles of leading scientists, under the general editorship of G. Goldovskiy [5].

These data allowed the identification of the images of the daughters of Paul I—Alexandra, Elena, Maria, and Catherine, painted by D. Levytsky, clarified their attribution, and helped to transfer the work from the Kyiv collection to a new canvas, which in turn enabled a full study of this portrait.

**Objectives of the study** is to consider the components of the artistic image of the portrait of the Grand Duchess Elena Pavlovna in her childhood by D. Levytsky.

The novelty of the work is to summarize the information on the attribution of the designated portrait from the collection of the Kyiv Picture Gallery National Museum and to analyze this artifact using instruments of the art studies.

The methodology of the research is based on the application of historical-comparative and art study approaches, historical-chronological method, allowing to analyze the iconographic prototypes of the images of Alexandra Pavlovna and Elena Pavlovna, daughters of the Russian emperor Paul I. Taken together, these approaches and methods allow us to find out the true name of the person in the portrait based on the principles of applied cultural studies and art studies, taking into account various historical, cultural and artistic aspects.

The scientific novelty is to determine the specifics of the elements of clothing and hairstyles of the model, as well as the artistic and stylistic features of the work.

**Presentation of the main research material.** Artist Dmytro Levytsky stressed that he was a Little Russian, as he grew up in Poltava region and mastered the basics of art in Kyiv. He was one of the two most famous domestic artists of the Baroque era (the second is his disciple, Volodymyr Borovikovskiy).

Historically, an outstanding master performed honorable orders of his time, including the first figures of the state—members of the Romanov family. Taking into account the broad talent and skillful training under the guidance of his father, Grigory Levytsky-Nos, a prominent Ukrainian engraver of the mid-XVIII century, who worked in Kyiv during Baroque and Rococo, Dmytro Levytsky was a master of a very wide creative range. His “four octaves” in artwork began with icons and frescoes and ended with children's formal portraits and multi-figure compositions of the Smolny Institute graduates.

Thus, the master became one of the first in the field of then Russian Empire to master the chamber (intimate) portrait. Fashion on such portrait spread from Watteau, Chardin and Fragonard in France since the mid-XVIII century, and was

picked up by Roslin in Sweden, Reynolds and Gainsborough in England. Ukrainian Levitskiy for a fairly short time became the court “number one” painter in Russia, which at the end of the century included Poland and Ukraine. By popularity, his ranking at that time was even higher than foreign portrait artists at the Russian court—Botom, Groot, and de la Bart. After all, in the early 1770s, the artist was recognized as a “patriarch” of fine arts and given the title of an “academician”.

Among the well known chamber portraits of the master of the next two decades the most interesting are the children's portraits of Anna, Maria, Katerina and Praskovya Artemievna Vorontsov. The artist developed long-lasting friendly relationships with the girls' father, so there is some warmth in the attitude of the artist. The lack of mannerisms, unnatural poses and gestures of these models by D. Levytsky with all the representativeness, inherent in the European portrait, allowed the artist to make these images the ones of gentle creatures that represent virginity and sincerity.

However, the peak of the “sophistication” was the work on the portraits of the first persons of the state: Tsesarevich Alexander I in his childhood (1787) and the daughters of Emperor Paul—the Grand Duchesses Alexandra, Elena, Maria and Catherine (1790s, some in several variations). “Russian [that is, Ukrainian] Gainsborough”, or “Russian Rembrandt”, as the artist was called, remarkably masterfully reproduced the inner world of his models, without depriving them of the image of that high status, which should have been emphasized. As a competent colorist and subtle psychologist, the author managed to show not only the thin lace and patterns of muslin and fabric of that time, but also the delicate soul of these children, not depriving them of mercy, naturalness, grace, emphasizing a peculiar expression of each person's face, presenting them in easy and natural poses.

All of these works predict the emergence of a new style—romanticism on the one hand, on the other—the positions of realism about the true reproduction of models and appeal to the refinements and dynamics of a gentle and at the same time spectacular, attractive rococo. It seems that the artist, who was the god of details, including hairstyles, patterns of clothing, texture of fabrics, also took a lot from the Baroque. For example, the luxury of exquisite ornamentation, decoration and accessories with the use of picturesque exquisite and exotic materials, almost unconnected textures, full of spirit of the dogma of beauty and majesty.

The second work from a series of portraits of young grand dukes and duchesses, executed by a talented brush master, is in the collection of the Kyiv Picture Gallery National Museum. In it, as in most of the works of the end of this difficult era, the tendencies of time—to combine several traditions—have been reflected. In particular, the *parsuna* portrait of the previous era (by which artists, first of all, tried to reflect the social status and occupation—the king, boyar, metropolitan, etc.) with influences of German, Flemish, Italian and French art, including Western European engraving.

In the second series of children's portraits D. Levytsky actually repeats the schemes found in the portraits of daughters of his friend Vorontsov. However, he makes them more

representative and idealized, considering the official order from Paul I. If the children of Artemiy Ivanovich seem like cute, carefree creatures who have the right to be naughty and fun, then the expressions of the faces of the grand dukes and duchesses are more adult and well-balanced, as if deprived of the right to have a childhood. Girls appear in front of us in the form of mini-ladies, who are being prepared for the role of the first ladies of the leading European countries. These portraits also have an advertising trait: to show future bridegrooms their potential candidates. Accordingly, the artist tried to portray Emperor Paul's daughters as restrained, young socialites, deprived of the childish mischief.

Severity, balance, and sustainability of models characteristic for classicism are fully exposed in these series. Although, of course, the girls, and even the future emperor Alexander I, are not devoid of charm. However, in these portraits all the details are well thought out, predefined, which probably deprived the artist of some right to the variability in poses, gestures and the use of his own interpretation, and provided a portrait with the shade of dryness. Moreover, the rectangular format of these works was different from the oval format, typical for rococo, used in a series of portraits of members of the Vorontsov family.

According to N. Gershenson-Chegodavaeva, the grand duchesses, daughters of Paul I, were almost pure-blooded Germans and D. Levytsky portrayed them as such [5, p. 320]. The most successful piece from this series is a portrait of a girl, who for many years (until 1985) was considered to be Alexandra. In fact, as follows from the iconographic primary sources, this is the image of another duchess, the youngest—Elena Pavlovna. This child was less alike of not so handsome Paul I and resembled his mother, the great Empress Catherine II, more.

“Grand Duchess Elena Pavlovna (1784–1803)—the second daughter of Paul I. This little one,” wrote about her grandmother, an enlightener and philosopher, “is of extraordinary beauty—that’s why I called her Elena, that is in honor of the Trojan beauty Helen.” Catherine II considered this child the most beautiful of her grandchildren and in correspondence repeatedly emphasized the correctness of her face and harmony. In her opinion, the little Duchess had a good heart and was “extremely lively and frivolous”. From childhood, she showed a particular tendency toward arts and dance. Over time, her virtues and successful advertising became the pretext for successful marriage—in 1799 she was married to the Frederick-Ludwig, Prince of Mecklenburg-Schwerin [5]. Marriage was a success, the couple had two children. Still, early marriage (at the age of 14) and several births in a row undermined Elena's health, which was the reason of her death 4 years later.

Re-attribution of the Grand Duchess's portrait was made possible by verifying the information with copies of D. Levytsky's works from the Pavlovsky Palace Museum near St. Petersburg. Under the designated portrait in the Russian collection, not only a copy was found, but also a miniature of it. Both of them were considered portraits of the elder Alexandra and of the second Paul's

daughter Elena. In addition, in the edition *Russian portraits of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries* (in Russian, St. Petersburg, 1905, Vol. 1, No. 124) another pictorial copy of this portrait by D. Levytsky was printed, apparently executed at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> or during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. On the metal ribbon, which adorns the top of the frame, it is clearly imprinted: “MADAME LA GRANDE DUCHESSE HELENA PAWLOWNA.” That is, the preserved iconography confirms that it is a portrait of the Grand Duchess Elena, and not Alexandra.

From this series, another portrait by Levytsky from the collection of Ballet is known, which in 1921 was presented at the Russian art exhibition in Paris as the *Portrait of the Grand Duchess Catherine Pavlovna*. Another similar portrait (author's repetition?) is stored in the collection of M. Uspensky in Moscow. A copy of this work is in the collection of the Novosibirsk State Art Museum (Inv. No. J-406). Grand Duchess Elena Pavlovna (1784–1803) is depicted with the Grand Cross of the Order of Saint Catherine, which she received on December 22, 1784. The Grand Duchess Elena Pavlovna was later depicted by Vual in 1792, by V. Borovikovsky in 1796, by Lampi in 1797, by Viegelebren in 1797 [5, p. 89–90].

When in 1985 the State Russian Museum of St. Petersburg had a three-month long exhibition of D. Levytsky's works to commemorate the artist's 250<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary, over 100 works from 23 collections were on display. That was perfect opportunity to make a technical and technological examination of the portrait of a particular model from the collection of the Kyiv Picture Gallery National Museum (Kyiv National Museum of Russian Art at the time). Then the title was corrected, and the work was transferred into a new canvas of an enlarged size (the previous size being 62 × 49 cm). Accordingly, all the portraits of the daughters of Paul I by D. Levytsky received the following dimensions: *Alexandra*, 1790s (62 × 51 cm), *Elena*, 1791 (69 × 53 cm), *Maria*, 1790s (62 × 49.2 cm), *Catherine*, 1790s (62 × 49.2 cm).

It turned out that the author corrected the hairstyle of his model. At the time of the creation of the portrait of Elena other girls—Olga and Anna—in the imperial family were not yet born. The exact date of the Kyiv portrait is known according to the author's signature on the left at the background: “Pisal D. Levytsky. V 1791.” Taking into account that the author was already a mature artist with great experience and passing schools, he was able to perform a series of recent works with extremely thin painting, reminiscent of the paintings of old masters who used glazing.

That is why, as a sculptor, he laid the volumetric-spatial and coloristic basis of his works even at the initial stage of work with the canvas. Obviously, he used polychrome at the early stage of a painting, but not overcrowded colors, although the artist used more intense colors in comparison with the model, increasing the contrast between the lightest and the darkest spots. He then assembled them with small motions, defining the position of the head and body of the model in space, which, due to the depth of the space, seemed to be three-dimensional [5, p. 89–90].



D. Levytsky. Portraits of Anna Artemivna Vorontsova (1790) and of Grand Duchess Elena Pavlovna (1791)

For the artist it is also typical to have an extremely accurate sense of the proportions of the face, which allowed obtaining an undoubted similarity to the original. In addition, the artist worked very tactfully with a tone, immersing a figure in tonal gradations and encircling it in the air, operating with light. The colors of the stained pigments he diluted with whitewash (worked in mixed colors), thereby obtaining a harmonious balance between the tone and color, which testifies to his rich gift of color vision. Consistently applying layers of painting, the artist received an optical effect of translating the lower layers through the upper, which seemed to pass the light, “scattering” the inner space. In this way, the nuances of the finest light shades were achieved. In the final layers, the artist vigorously picked up brush smears from the sublimation, softening the contrast of light colors and the intensity of colored spots [5, p. 89–90].

Looking at the portrait of Elena Pavlovna, one can see a soft painting of the moisturized brush, which seems to be designed to create the effect of “watercolor” transparency. Thanks to layered glazing, the work’s texture is smoothed, it shimmers, as a pearl. The artist not only conveyed the external features of the Catherine’s II beloved one, but also opened the inner world of this girl.

It seems that D. Levytsky became interested in his model. By external calmness, self-confidence and balance, a sense of dignity, some kind of underlying anxiety, internal tension are captured. The 7-year-old looks much older than her age. In appearance, she looks like a 13–15-year-old. The artist seemed to feel, almost “scanned” this very pretty child without childhood, with smart, sensitive eyes and predicted that the fate of hers will be difficult and short. He portrayed Elena as a spirited creature, without a shade of sweet lyricism, with the face of intellectual and progressive personality (she indeed was intelligent, with “living” intelligence, brilliantly knew several European languages), emphasizing her noble posture.

The Duchess is dressed in a gown with combined fabrics—white and colored. A large cut on the chest borders with transparent weightless white lace. On the waist, the dress has a wide gray belt, echoing with a gray bow in the form of a flower in the hair and gray eyes of the model. On the left side of the chest is the Order of Saint Catherine Great Cross of burgundy color with a golden border. The color scheme is mostly made up of cold shades of gray, blue, black and green. The general background is greenish, soft and silvery, almost as if it is warm when you touch it. The background color is chosen not by chance. Obviously, the artist sought to emphasize that the model is in the stage of youth, in flowering and tender age.

Especially subtly, the artist passed the texture of the fabric, its silkiness and lightness. The glitches of color from the dress lay on the forehead and neck of the Grand Duchess, which are a composite knot of the work, combined with the compositional focus of attention. The rotation of the stripes on the fabric causes the rhythm of the picture, the lines give an image of some dynamic elasticity. The overall feeling of a portrait is like a glance at the future, the artist is clearly interested in the fate of this girl who has to sacrifice her desires for the sake of the crown, while she still may be lucky, and the desirable glory and authority will come. In fact, he tried to catch the elusive, “a smile of a free heart, dreaminess of languid eyes” [3].

In general, it should be noted that the costume of this model tends to the French fashion line of the time, to the style of Jean Louis Vual (cut of the dress that completely covers the upper part of the figure, with a wide skirt). Also interesting is the hairstyle of the Grand Duchess. It is, surprisingly, completely devoid of a large volume and a certain multilayer character, characteristic of the hairstyles of the early Baroque period [1]. Elena is depicted with a neat hairstyle like a “cascade”, picked up by a ribbon with a bow. The paint-

er saw her with fluffy, somewhat disobedient hair, which curls naturally. Thin strings of it are laid on the head like “rose buds”, like a wig. Even the ashy-grey shade of the Duchess’s curls hints at a certain “enlightenment”, the wisdom of such a young model. The color of the work resembles similar style used by D. Levytsky in the portrait of A. Vorontsova in her childhood years. In general, the artist created a vivid, colorful image, where the elegantly fitted clothes of well combined colors had to convey an idea of respect, according to L. Bilyakovich [1].

**Conclusions.** On the edge of baroque, rococo and classicism, a number of child portraits of the Romanov family were created by Ukrainian artist Dmytro Levytsky. Among other pieces, the most successful was the portrait

of the Grand Duchess Elena Pavlovna, previously considered to be the image of her elder sister Alexandra. Despite the correction of data on attribution, upon returning to Ukraine the work continued to be exhibited as a portrait of the Grand Duchess Alexandra Pavlovna for many decades. The image of the model today is interesting not only due to the layered painting style of the great artist, but also through the appeal of today’s close attention to the costume and hairstyle of the Baroque era. Passing through the halls of the Kyiv Picture Gallery National Museum, the viewer is accompanied in his journey through the exposition by the eyes Elena Pavlovna, who lived such a short but difficult life, and whose portrait remain the most expressive part of the entire portrait collection of the museum.

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**Школьна О. В.**

**Портрет великої княжни Олени Павлівни в дитинстві роботи Дмитра Левицького**

**Анотація.** Уточнено атрибуцію дитячого портрета великої княжни Олени Павлівни роботи визначного українського художника Дмитра Левицького. Портретні образи галереї Романових, представлені в українських художніх колекціях, нині потребують ґрунтовного вивчення й уточнення атрибуції, оскільки протягом останніх 100 років вони перебували на периферії вітчизняних мистецтвознавчих досліджень. У цьому зв'язку особливо важливим є спадщина вітчизняного художника Дмитра Левицького, сина визначного українського гравера доби бароко Григорія Левицького-Носа.

Всебічний аналіз портрета великої княжни Олени Павлівни з Київського національного музею російського мистецтва підтверджує належність твору пензлю Дмитра Левицького. Проаналізовано творчу манеру Д. Левицького зі створення художнього образу портретованої, доведено його авторство. Акцентовано на підходах майстра до пластичного моделювання, виконання підмалювка, опрацювання світла, тіні, кольору, лесування. Обґрунтовано зміну назви портрета, зважаючи на відому іконографію доньок Павла I — великих княгинь Олександри, Олени, Марії та Катерини. Уточнено питання експертної атрибуції твору, що належить збірці Національного музею «Київська картинна галерея».

**Ключові слова:** дитячий портрет, Україна, XVII–XVIII століття, Дмитро Левицький, художній образ.

**Школьная О. В.**

**Портрет великой княжны Елены Павловны в детстве работы Дмитрия Левицкого**

**Аннотация.** Уточнена атрибуция детского портрета великой княжны Елены Павловны работы выдающегося украинского художника Дмитрия Левицкого. Уточнен вопрос экспертной атрибуции произведения, которое принадлежит собранию Национального музея «Киевская картинная галерея».

Портретные образы галереи Романовых, представленные в украинских художественных коллекциях, ныне нуждаются в основательном изучении и уточнении атрибуции, поскольку на протяжении последних 100 лет они находились на периферии отечественных искусствоведческих исследований. В этой связи особенно важным является наследие отечественного художника Дмитрия Левицкого, сына выдающегося украинского гравера поры барокко Григория Левицкого-Носа.

Всесторонний анализ портрета великой княжны Елены Павловны из Национального музея «Киевская картинная галерея» подтверждает принадлежность произведения кисти Дмитрия Левицкого. Проанализирована творческая манера Д. Левицкого в создании художественного образа портретированной, доказано его авторство. Акцентируется внимание на подходах мастера к пластическому моделированию, выполнению подмалёвка, обработки света, теней, цвета, лессирования. Обоснованы изменения названия портрета, учитывая известную иконографию дочерей Павла I — великих княжон Александры, Елены, Марии и Екатерины.

**Ключевые слова:** детский портрет, Украина, XVII–XVIII века, Дмитрий Левицкий, художественный образ.

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