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# Modern Jewelry Art of Moldova

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## Abstract:

In this article the author examines some problems concerning formation of the jewelry industry in the territory of Bessarabia, Moldavian RSS and the Republic of Moldova, for the considerations that contemporary art jewelry is presented as a subject very poorly investigated, despite having an interest for historical researchers, the study art, ethnography and culturology. Are determinate some aspects of the evolution of different types of jewelry manufacturing workshops and articles Jewelry Plant "Giuvaier" from Chisinau, founded in 1972.

## Keywords:

jewelry art, museum collections, manufacturing, modern masters, jewelry decorations

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The modern jewelry art of Moldova is an inadequately investigated topic; hereupon it is of a particular interest for historians, art critics and jewelry admirers.

At the beginning of the XX century, many goldsmiths worked in the Moldavian cities. «The Address Directory Calendar» issued at the beginning of the century by some S. Shaposhnikov, provides valuable information and advertisements of Moldavian jewelers, addresses of workshops and shops-salons, where precious metals and stones for jewelry wares making were for sale (Anuarul 1924). We managed to find out that jewelers were mainly engaged in making and selling gold, silver, diamonds and platinum wares, while apprentices made inexpensive wares from nickel silver, German silver, and brass under careful supervision of skilled workmen. It should be noticed that the jewelers of Bessarabia together with watchmakers made the smallest cartel. So, for instance, the information of 1925 tells about 182 jewelers incorporated in working workshops together with watchmakers, out of which 150 goldsmiths worked in town. Such insufficient number of jewelers can be explained by the fact that they worked, mainly, for order, for the limited circle of buyers. In fact coral beads, platinum or gold wares were incredibly expensive even for a few well-off townspeople (Condraticova, 2008, 185-192).

With the help of museum collections, literature and historical sources, we succeeded in recreating the woman's dress of the XX century and the characteristic jewelry wares. The townswomen generally preferred to wear a few strings of coral, mother-of-pearl, amber and, in great number, - glass beads. Beads and bead strings were intertwined in plaits, and their amount indicated the marital status of women. In some northlands and in Prydnestrovya the betrothed girl intertwined three decorative strings in her plaits compared to the unmarried ones, who had a right to carry 1 or 2 bead strings. In south Moldova, fianc es and newlyweds intertwined the beads of various silver or gold coins in plaits. Well-to-do fianc es distinguished themselves with pearl decorations symbolizing innocence and cleanness; the others used white bead for forehead or neck bandages. In some villages they wore 1 up to 3 strings of bead and in the districts, inhabited primary by Bulgarians, Gagauzes or Gypsies, they wore up to 15–18 strings of glass beads.

In rural locality, one could meet girls and young women in the embroidered with bead, silver or even gold threads blouses. Men preferred to wear the embroidered purses, copper betts, decorated with vegetable or geometrical decorative ornaments, tiny beads. These wares possessed some magic purpose, symbolized the well-being, success and therefore were used in Moldavian wedding ceremonies. It should be mentioned that expensive jeweler decorations were very often purchased not only as a beautiful piece of work but also for underlining the owner's social and economic status in society.

In traditional Moldavian family's hryvnas (the wares made of various coins) were very fashionable. Similar hryvnas can also be observed at Bulgarians and Gagauzes, and in 1950–60s soviet kopeykas were used for making hryvnas. The Moldavian goldsmiths successfully used this type of decorations for their original wares, only they offered geometrical figurines, various symbols or floral compositions instead of kopeykas.

The townswomen differed substantially from rural women in their jeweler preferences, due to the latest European trends. Ladies decorated their fashionable hats with different fibulas, and their intricate hair-dos were decorated with hairpins with pastes or varicolored stones, with hairpins of ornamented hanging, more frequently of a bead, a stylized flower or a pearl. Brooches were used for hats, neckweares or ties decoration. Hairpins and brooches, made with the use of pale color enamel, colored pastes and zoomorphic decorative patterns, deserve special attention. Mainly those were hairpins-butterflies or dragon-fly brooches. Modern jewelers successfully use these motives in youth decorations making, harmoniously combining them with new tendencies.

The workshops of precious metals and inexpensive alloys church utensil repairing and making were of special importance for the development of Moldova jeweler industry. At the beginning of the XX century, the role of the expensive church objects grew substantially due to the new workshops, which were engaged exceptionally in manufacturing the wares for churches and monasteries of Bessarabia. The workshops of Kishinev Archbishopness, opened in 1911, mainly fulfilled the orders for the church utensil: icons framings, candlesticks, icons and copper crosses (Catalog 1940).

In 1940, workshops were renovated, equipped with the proper equipment new modern electric machine tools for jeweler wares casting were purchased. Local goldsmiths worked with any precious metal and cheap alloys and fulfilled the individual orders.

In 1944 – 1972 the closed areas of gold wares making were created at some enterprises in Moldova. The wares, produced at «Elektroshirpotreb» plant «Elektrometallorremont», «The Factory of Metal Wares and Repairing\*», as well as at «Progress» factory opened in 1958, were estimated and went through the testing in Odessa Testing Office up to the opening of Kishinev Testing Watch in the middle of 1980th.

In 1972, within the framework of the all-union program UNIYUVELIRPROM, based on the large workshop a jeweler factory KUZ was opened in Kishinev, one of the last in the USSR, by the way. The development of jeweler production in Moldavia was characterized by the fact that the majority of jewelers worked in the capital. Those were specialists, which got their education at Russian schools or the artists that have mastered the principles of jeweler art independently. Having mastered the technology of

jeweler wares making to perfection, the artists-jewelers offered the unique and original models of jewelry, made gold, silver, natural stones wares according to the sketches of their own; they took into consideration both the requests of the average consumers and the connoisseurs of unique jewelry. It should be mentioned that the wares made according to the sketches of the second half of the XXth century masters, have been used and are still being used up to present today, and are very demanded, attracting by their original composition, as well as with the bold combination of vegetable motives and geometrical forms. Jewelers at the cutting shop opened at the plant at the end of 1980s, where the leading experts, that were invited to work there by the first KUZ director Valentine Suntsov, worked, cut the harmoniously fitted colored and synthetic stones (ruby, emerald, sapphire, corundum, turquoise, nephrite, cornelian and many others). Suntsov's undeniable achievement was that he managed to transform a small workshop into a powerful factory of those times at which more than 400 artists–designers, jewelers, framers, casters and polishers were creating. They worked mainly with 375 and 583 standard gold, and only at the beginning of 1990s, the production of silver and gilded wares was started (Condraticova 2009, 289-298).

At the same time local jewelers worked at the creation of decorative wares and jewelry at the jeweler workshop in the system of MSCR Artistic Fund. The experts were mastering the unknown handicraft grasping all its secrets and creating beautiful things. This was the period of Moldavian jeweler art prime, which astonished with its originality and uniqueness. The works of the goldsmiths were highly artistic and always demanded, in spite of the inexpensive alloys (mainly, this was nickel silver or brass) usage.

The samples were discussed at the Artistic Counsel; the estimation of sketches was critical and demanding. Only after Artistic Counsel approval, the goldsmith got the right for production of 25–50 copies of the work presented. The wares were mainly, manufactured manually, which granted them some unique individuality. A Jeweler–artist needed the feeling of freedom of creation and the conditions for the embodiment of his original projects and sketches in life. The Creative House «Daile» in Palang, where in the process of intercourse with jewelers from Russia and other allied republics the necessary encouragement and consultations could be acquired gave such possibility of self-realization. In different years Vladimir Vasytkov, Alexei Marko and Georgiy Kozhushnyan got such rare possibility (Nicorici 2008, 90-109).

Gold and silver wares of the second half of the XX century can be classified according their purpose and the artistic project: this is both everyday, simple, plain decorations, and jeweler wares intended for solemn events. Some wares brightly demonstrate tendencies in the artistic world of 1970 – 1990s, among which the combination of new forms and national traditions in

decorations is most distinctly represented. The unique talent ability and skilfulness and, of course, the jeweler's soul can be noticed in these wares.

The masters created their special, unique style of jeweler wares, which are a success up to present day, taking into especial consideration that the interest to trendy decorations and accessories of 70-90 years of the previous century, such as massive rings, finger-rings, beads, mainly insertions of red color and warm tones, has lately been revived.

Despite difficult times, in the second half of the XX century women wore wedding ring large, beads or thin chain less, earrings more known as «Moldavian series». These are earrings stylized after hearts, moonlike earrings, with the engraved floral decorative patterns.

In 1991 Kishinev Jeweler Factory was renamed «Giuvaier» (Jeweler), both brand name and trademark changed (it consists of the letter «G» and the national emblem of the Republic Moldova). Now the factory remains a monopolist of jewelry production in Moldova, developing in the conditions of market economy and hard competition with numerous private workshops. Advanced technologies allow providing the complete production cycle of jeweler wares making. The enterprise offers more than 2000 models of gold and silver wares with the inclusions of precious, semi-precious and artificial stones to its buyers and the connoisseurs of art. The production of decorations for women and men for children and teenagers, unique and everyday things regarding the latest trends of jeweler fashion has been mastered. The wares under the «Giuvaier» trademark have repeatedly participated in different national and international exhibitions: «Tybko» (România, 1995 and 1996), «The Industry of Moldova» (1995, Tyumen), «CIS – Paris» (1995), the annual «Jeweler» fair (Moscow), the annual exhibition «Made in Moldova».

Designed and produced by modern masters, jeweler decorations make the vivid example of professionalism – the decorative expressiveness of form, the skilful application of various techniques and materials, the originality of color combinations and the filigree placing of decorative patterns. Each jeweler is a romantic in his nature, therefore stones are music for him, and the metal, in which they are framed, is the dance. Uniting, they create the masterpiece of grace and high art.

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