

Title: Andrei Tarkovsky and Acmeism
Anna Aydinyan, Yale University

Andrei Tarkovsky considered avoidance of symbolism an important principle of his directing mode. He believed that “cinema is an art which operated with realities,” and resisted “attempts to look at a frame as a sign of something else.” By doing so, Tarkovsky in a certain way followed the steps of the Acmeism, a literary movement that came forth as a reaction against Russian Symbolism at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Finding an independent value, “samocennost’,” in the phenomena of reality, Tarkovsky and the Acmeists saw art as a way to immortalize them. Sculpture, as the most durable form of art drew their special attention. Both Tarkovsky and the Acmeists used the metaphor of sculpting referring to their own creativity. Both insisted on the importance of craftsmanship in art, and had similar understanding of artistic inspiration. Tarkovsky shared with the Acmeists their “longing for the world’s culture.” Like the Acmeists he was particularly interested in Japanese and Italian art and poetry, and the culture of the Middle Ages.

If the Acmeists often practice ekphrasis - recreating a particular work of visual art with poetic means, Tarkovsky creates specific forms of cinematic ekphrasis in his films. Both cinematic and poetic ekphrasis brings forth the problem of translation between spatial and temporal forms of art. In approaching this problem Tarkovsky and the Acmeists develop similar ideas of rhythm and duration, time and memory. One possible explanation of these similarities is the influence of the philosophy of Henri Bergson on both the Acmeists and Tarkovsky. At the same time direct influence of the aesthetics of Acmeism on Tarkovsky, who knew and appreciated their works, is not only possible but very likely.