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Lyrical aspects in the intimate landscapes of Zoltan Sholtes

Abstract. The relevance of the research lies in the need for a deeper understanding of Zoltan Sholtes's contribution to the formation of the Transcarpathian school of painting. Despite considerable interest in the Transcarpathian school, certain aspects of Sholtes's work remain underexplored. This study aimed to identify the defining features of Sholtes's landscape painting and to analyse the artistic means and conceptual approaches that shaped the emotional content of the artist's chamber works. The study revealed that the main directions in Zoltan Sholtes's landscape art were lyrical landscapes as depictions of nature, "humanised" landscapes, rural landscapes, and architectural landscapes. Particular attention was given to the emotional dimension of his works, in which nature acquired symbolic meaning and reflected the inner states of the human soul. The study highlighted the differences between Sholtes's lyrical chamber landscapes and his epic panoramic compositions, with a focus on the compositional, colouristic, and technical means the artist used to convey deep emotional content. The key artistic and stylistic approaches in his work included realism with detailed composition; impressionism with the generalisation of form; and a colour-textured expressionism, where emotional colour qualities and rich painterly textures dominate. The lyrical landscape in Sholtes's oeuvre emerges not only as a genre form, but as a philosophical tool for contemplating nature and the human inner world. Through the use of varied compositional, colouristic, and technical techniques, the artist imparts depth and multifaceted meaning to his works. The findings contributed to a deeper understanding of the aesthetic and artistic principles of the Transcarpathian school and underscore the significance of Sholtes's individual style within the artistic processes of the 20th century. The practical value of this research can be found in art history, where the artist's experience can serve as an example for developing methods to convey the emotional components of landscape painting

Keywords: Transcarpathian school of painting; creative method; artistic language; composition; lyricism; intimacy; plein air

Introduction

An urgent issue in contemporary art studies is the objective investigation of art schools and artistic phenomena in Ukrainian visual arts, which have shaped national identity and stylistic features of specific eras. The analysis of Zoltan Sholtes's work, a prominent representative of the Transcarpathian school of painting, clarifies its ideological and artistic characteristics and reveals the

significance of the artist's individual style in the development of modern Ukrainian landscape painting. Over the period from 2020 to 2025, scientific research has demonstrated a sustained interest in local artistic phenomena as essential components of the national artistic tradition and as expressions of cultural identity that have shaped the broader development of fine arts. The

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Transcarpathian school of painting has attracted considerable scholarly attention. O. Kashshai (2018) studied this school in the context of its artistic and cultural value, as well as within specific historical and cultural periods. The author focused on specific steps in the formation of this art school, emphasising the role of A. Erdélyi and J. Bokshay. Building on these findings, O. Kashshay (2020) emphasised the artistic value of the Transcarpathian art school's output, arguing that its wide recognition in contemporary Ukrainian visual culture was rooted in its high level of professionalism and distinctive visual language.

Researcher H. Skliarenko (2021) analysed the development of the Transcarpathian school in the 1960s, focusing on a return to modernism and examining the preserved traditions of European modernism filtered through the prism of the region's folk art. T. Ivanytska (2023) investigated Transcarpathian portrait painting in the second half of the 20th century in various contexts – both as a general phenomenon and from the perspective of specific figurative and ideological tasks, including traditional and innovative tendencies. Individual artists have also been the subject of focused scholarly studies. The work of A. Erdeli was explored by O. Lagutenko & A. Seitسانova (2024), who examined the late period of A. Erdeli's work from 1945 to 1955, identified the development of a new method based on the combination of the decorative, expressive realism of earlier years with the demands of socialist realism. This resulted in greater descriptiveness and detail across all genres.

The figurative, thematic, and artistic features of V. Prykhodko's still lifes were analysed by E. Mykula (2021). By examining the relationship between the semantic, object-based, and painterly-formal levels of depiction in V. Prykhodko's still lifes, the author identified several directions and defined their specific features. N. Belichko & A. Cheipesh (2022) dedicated several studies to the impact of historical events on the work of E. Konratovych. A. Cheipesh (2020) examined the expressionist style of E. Konratovych in the context of depicting the tragic aspects of the social condition of the Transcarpathian people. Researchers O. Melnyk & V. Shtets (2024) studied the professional activities and creative collaborations of Zoltan Sholtes within the cultural and political life of Transcarpathia from 1933 to 1948. Despite the fact that Zoltan Sholtes's work was occasionally referenced in most studies on the Transcarpathian school, there has remained a lack of comprehensive research that systematically examined the artist's stylistic features, creative method, and evolution of artistic language within a broader European context.

The scientific significance of research on Z. Sholtes's work lies not only in expanding knowledge about Ukrainian art of the 20th century, but also in a deeper understanding of the principles of lyrical painting and the technical aspects used to create emotionally rich landscapes. This study aimed to identify and analyse the lyrical aspects of Zoltan Sholtes's intimate landscapes,

to determine the artistic techniques that conveyed emotional states and the subjective perception of nature, and to clarify their significance within the broader context of the Transcarpathian school of painting's development. The objectives of the study were to identify lyrical aspects in Z. Sholtes's chamber landscapes during both the early and mature periods of his work; to systematise and conduct an art-historical analysis of paintings based on thematic and narrative characteristics; and to outline the prospects for applying Z. Sholtes's creative method in contemporary plein air practice.

Materials and Methods

The methodology of the research involved a comprehensive approach, incorporating system-comparative and analytical methods, historical-cultural and periodisation methods, iconographic and comparative-typological methods, as well as compositional, stylistic, and art-historical analysis. The system-comparative and analytical methods were employed to identify the key features of Sholtes's artistic strategy across different periods of the artist's creative activity, as well as to reveal the distinctive characteristics of Zoltan Sholtes's individual artistic language within the context of the local artistic tradition. The historical-cultural approach was employed to study the artist's work in the context of the socio-cultural processes of Transcarpathia in the 20th century. The method of periodisation was applied to highlight the stages of the artist's creative evolution, identifying characteristic changes in subject matter, stylistics, colour schemes, and compositional approaches across different time periods. This division made it possible to trace how Z. Sholtes's artistic language transformed from early explorations to a mature individual style, as well as to identify the key features of each creative period in the context of shifts in the sociocultural environment. Iconographic and comparative-typological methods were applied to analyse the subjects and images in the artist's landscapes, taking into account their symbolic and emotional content. The methods of compositional and stylistic analysis were used to examine the features of spatial construction, rhythm, scale, and interaction of elements in the artist's landscapes, as well as to identify the key characteristics of Z. Sholtes's individual style. Art-historical analysis was applied to interpret Sholtes's artistic language, particularly by studying the artist's use of colour, painting techniques, materials, plastic means, and the emotional and figurative content of his intimate landscapes. This allowed for the identification of the general patterns of his creative style and the specific interpretation of the landscape genre in chamber paintings. The research was conducted in several stages. At the first stage, source collection was carried out, including the review of scholarly literature and exhibition catalogues. The visual analysis stage involved the study of Z. Sholtes's paintings in private collections, including direct examination of the artworks. The next stage consisted of thematic and

narrative systematisation of the works according to the stages of the artist's creative development and subject matter. In the final synthesising stage, conclusions were formulated and prospects for further research were identified.

Results and Discussion

The formation of Z. Sholtes's individual artistic language was based on the theoretical and practical principles of the school of József Bokszy and Adalbert Erdélyi. At the same time, a decisive role in the artist's development was played by his personal perception of the world, mental affinity with national archetypes and native land, as well as a deep emotional involvement with the depicted subject, which was particularly vivid in his landscapes. It was this genre that became the primary field for the artist's self-expression, allowing him to combine external observation of nature with an internal experience of reality. In Z. Sholtes's landscape works, one can discern not only the influence of the academic school, but also his unique ability to transform natural impressions into symbolically rich images, imbued with lyricism, emotional depth, and national colour.

Art-historical analysis of Z. Sholtes's landscape works revealed the characteristic features of their compositional solutions, stylistics, colour structure, and image composition. This approach helped classify the artist's landscapes according to their interpretation of nature, plot-compositional parameters, and stylistic manner, while also allowing for the tracing of the poetic and lyrical traits inherent in the artist's chamber landscapes. To avoid a purely descriptive approach to analysing the artist's landscape works, it was necessary to consider the full range of artistic means the painter employed. As researcher B. Kuzma (2007) noted, the essence of Z. Sholtes's method lies in the clarity and accessibility of the artistic language of compositional landscape painting. The artist's landscapes tended toward the realist tradition, yet the realism in his style blended with the expressive power of the image, an impressionistic sense of light, as well as elements of romanticism and symbolism. The latter were determined by the artist's deep need to convey his emotions through form and colour. Symbolism in Sholtes's works was vividly expressed, with distinct individual traits, reflecting the national mentality – a love of life, optimism, and a folk perception of the world. The panoramic Carpathian landscapes in his works often had an epic tone, while in his intimate landscapes, the grandeur of nature was balanced by the presence of human beings – mountain dwellers for whom these spaces were a source of stability, labour, and spiritual rootedness. Homes, churches, field paths, haystacks, and peasants engaged in daily activities – these motifs fill the artist's canvases, forming the foundation of his worldview, which was based on the harmonious coexistence of humans with nature. Another important feature of Sholtes's creative method was the

combination of poetic admiration for the beauty of the surrounding world with a rational, prolonged observation of nature in its constant changeability.

The landscape legacy of Zoltan Sholtes revealed several key thematic directions that the artist explored in his practice. Among them, it is worth highlighting the intimate lyrical landscape and the monumental scenery with an epic resonance. Monumental landscape painting was a key element in Zoltan Sholtes's artistic legacy during his period of creative maturity. The beauty of the Carpathian nature, the expansive horizons, and the endless mountain spaces inspired the artist to create largescale panoramic compositions that impressed with their epic quality. The first panoramic works in the artist's career can be traced back to the late 1930s, when he began to move beyond the intimate format, gradually expanding his field of view from the secluded corners of Transcarpathia to symbolic, generalised representations of nature. In works such as *Above Rakhiv* (1951) and *Under Pikuy* (1958), there was a shift from local lyricism to epic grandeur – with rhythmic lines of panoramas, an elevated horizon, and a sense of spatial infinity (Fig. 1). Sholtes did not simply depict natural motifs; his goal was deeper – to convey the spirit of the Carpathians, their grandeur through the painted representation of mountain ranges, meadows, and ridges.

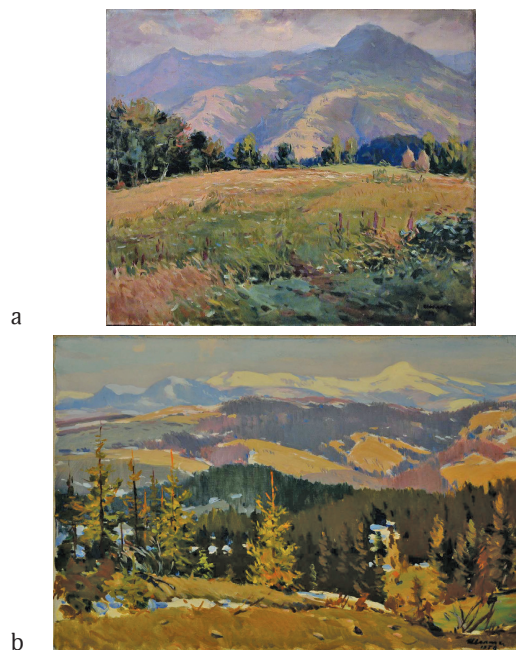


Figure 1. The epic panoramic works of Z. Sholtes
Note: a – *Above Rakhiv*. Canvas, oil, 100×85 cm (1951);
 b – *Under Pikuy*. Canvas, oil, 80×120 cm (1958)

Source: photo by the authors

The artist's paintings were not mere visual impressions, but rather an attempt to comprehend nature's elemental force as a source of spiritual uplift and emotional energy. Unlike the epic panoramic landscapes, in lyrical

works the artist focused on individual, often highly personal fragments of the Carpathian landscape – these could be solitary trees, mountain paths, calm river pools, or traditional Hutsul homes, as seen in works such as *Landscape with a River* (1947), *Winter Evening in the Village* (1973), and *Early Spring* (1970). These landscapes were imbued with mood: the changing states of nature were associated with the artist’s personal inner experiences, creating an emotional connection between the depicted scene and his worldview (Fig. 2).

Thus, unlike the way nature was interpreted in epic landscapes (expanded composition, high horizon line, bird’s-eye view, universality of the image, grandeur of nature), lyrical intimate landscapes were characterised by limited composition, detailed interpretation that contrasted with background generalisations, a poetic approach to everyday subjects, and idyllic qualities. In such works, nature was presented intimately, as if seen from within – through the lens of personal experience. While the epic landscape sought to convey the grandeur of nature, often emphasising symbolic or elevated motifs, the intimate landscape, by contrast, focused on a limited fragment of reality, where scale was less important than atmosphere and emotional depth. The composition of intimate landscapes was typically compact, with careful attention paid to foreground details, which were often rendered expressively and realistically. This created a contrast with the background, which remained generalised and more decorative in character. The poetics of these works lies in the ability to discover beauty in the ordinary: a familiar rural view, a path winding through grass. Such landscapes often conveyed a sense of idyll, serenity, and harmony – emotions that evolved into a profound personal experience of nature. All of this formed the distinctive visual language of the intimate landscape, where the primary goal was not spatial representation, but the expression of inner state, mood, and a quiet dialogue between the individual and the world (Table 1).



Figure 2. The lyrical intimate landscapes of Z. Sholtes
Note: a – *Landscape with a River*. Canvas, oil, 68.5×98 cm (1947); b – *Early Spring*. Canvas, oil, 98×80 cm (1970); c – *Winter Evening in the Village*. Canvas, oil, 60×80 cm (1973)
Source: photo by the authors

Table 1. The features of nature interpretation in Zoltan Scholtes’s epic and lyrical landscapes

Epic landscape painting	Lyrical intimate landscape
Characteristic features of landscape composition and methods of forming the emotional image of nature	Characteristic features of landscape composition and techniques for creating the emotional image of nature
Extended composition	Limited composition
High horizon line	Detailed interpretation
View from above	Background generalisations
Universality of the image	Poetics in everyday subjects, revealed in detail
Grandeur of nature	Idyllic qualities, revealed in the subject

Source: developed by the authors

Lyricism is the presence of heightened emotionality, sincerity, and intensity in works of literature and art; it is characterised by a distinct subjective mood and emotional experience (Lyricism, n.d.). When addressing the concept of lyricism in art, it is important to trace not only its formal manifestations in the visual language of a

work – such as soft colour palettes, fluid lines, and chamber composition – but also the deeper semantic levels related to the intimacy of experience, the author’s subjective worldview, and the image’s ability to evoke an emotional response in the viewer. In this context, lyricism emerges as an artistic means of conveying

a personal attitude towards the world, as a metaphor for the emotional dialogue between the artist and the viewer. This trait is especially evident in the work of artists inclined towards a chamber, poetic interpretation of reality. For example, in the works of Ukrainian painter V. Zakharchenko, as O. Zhadeyko (2019) emphasised, “lyricism appears not as a secondary aesthetic category, but as a key to understanding the artist’s creative method”. A similar kind of emotional immersion in the depicted can be observed in the works of Caspar David Friedrich, where nature became a mirror of the human inner state. According to H.-G. Gadamer, art is not merely a means of expression, but an event of understanding; thus, lyrical art reveals the inner truth of subjective experience (Trufanova, 2021). This approach resonates with phenomenological perspectives in European aesthetic discourse, particularly in the works of M. Diaconu (2006), who explored the emotional sensibility of art as a space of intimacy and experience.

For Zoltan Sholtes, nature was not merely an object of contemplation or a background for events, but a sacralised space where the artist’s emotional drama unfolded. Sholtes’s landscape lyricism resonated with the traditions of the Romantic vision of nature characteristic of 19th-century German art, yet at the same time remained deeply rooted in the local Transcarpathian aesthetic of perceiving the environment as a living, spiritualised medium. In the works of Caspar David Friedrich, the landscape functioned as a visual metaphor for solitude and spiritual searching. In the art of Z. Sholtes, nature became a space of silence, contemplation, and empathy, where visual lyricism served as a form of philosophical reflection on the existence of mountain dwellers, and each canvas was an attempt to convey this aesthetic and emotional experience to the viewer. It was lyricism, as the emotional attunement of the painting, that became the key to understanding the artist’s inner world. Sholtes did not merely depict nature – he conveyed through it his feelings, memories, philosophical reflections on life, and his connection to his native land.

Lyricism in Zoltan Sholtes’s works was not a decorative element, but a profound emotional component that shaped the overall resonance of the landscape. In further art-historical analysis, it was precisely this aspect that allowed a deeper insight into the essence of the figurative structure of his works. The early landscapes of Zoltan Sholtes, though represented by only a few surviving works, constituted an important stage in his artistic development. They reflected the artist’s first attempts to comprehend the surrounding world through the prism of personal emotional perception. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, Sholtes actively worked in watercolour, pastel, and oil painting media, often in plein air conditions. The artist’s early works were characterised by intimacy, refinement, and a profound lyricism that conveyed a sense of inner harmony between the artist and

nature. In the works of this period, the influence of the impressionist tradition was particularly noticeable, manifesting itself in the attention to the changing states of light, the seasonal dynamics of the landscape, and the emotional atmosphere. In particular, his pastel studies created during journeys through the Uzh valley capture the beauty of the Transcarpathian landscape through a light, almost elusive play of colour and light. In such works as *Church in Uzhok* (1936) and *Stream* (1936), one can observe not only the artist’s professional growth, but also the formation of his aesthetic vision (Fig. 3).

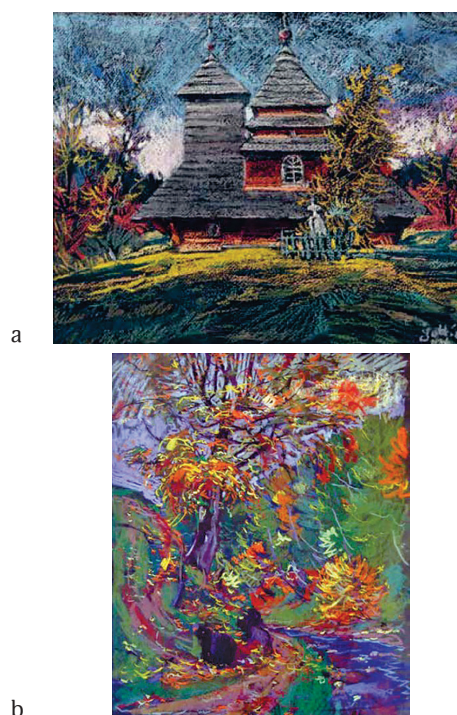


Figure 3. The early landscapes of Z. Sholtes

Note: a – *Church in Uzhok*. Paper, pastel, 42×53 cm (1936);
b – *Stream*. Paper, pastel, 64.5×49.5 cm (1936)

Source: photo by the authors

Here, the landscape appears not as an objective reality, but as an artistic image imbued with emotion, inner silence, and contemplation. Sholtes paid particular attention to colour harmony, tonal transitions, and texture, making the paintings feel less like studies from nature and more like refined lyrical moods. The lightness of the pastel stroke added delicacy, almost transparency, to the images, emphasising the intimacy of the artist’s perception. The lyricism in Sholtes’s early landscapes was also revealed in the absence of dramatic contrasts or heroic narratives. The artist deliberately focused on the everyday yet poetic world of rural outskirts, forests, streams, churches, and mountain silhouettes. His interest lay in quiet contemplation, in capturing the invisible connections between humans and nature, and in conveying the rhythm of life through

light and colour. This became one of the key features of his style – retained in later works – but it was in the early landscapes that it manifested with particular sincerity and immediacy. Thus, the early period of Zoltan Sholtes’s work demonstrated his formation as an observant and lyrical artist, who perceived the landscape not merely as a spatial form, but as a bearer of emotional tension, silence, and peace. These early works laid the foundation for his future aesthetic language – delicate, evocative, and intimate – which would eventually define his place in the history of Ukrainian painting as one of the most sensitive interpreters of the beauty of his native landscape (Tarasenko & Tarasenko).

In the 1930s and 1940s, Zoltan Sholtes continued to work on lyrical, intimate landscapes, discovering romantic corners of nature and village streets in Transcarpathia. These works, in the words of researcher O. Moshay (1989), were imbued with a “patriarchal idyllic quality” that reflected the lifestyle of the local peasantry. The landscapes *Village Yard* (1936), *In Winter* (1937), and *Village by the River* (1946) depicted fragments of the artist’s everyday surroundings (Fig. 4). In these works, the artist did not merely depict nature, but conveyed the unique mood of each moment through his colour palette, use of light, and brushwork. In *Village Yard*, one senses the tension of an impending storm through the saturated, contrasting palette. By modelling objects with impasto strokes, the artist emphasised the atmosphere, conveying the dynamics of the elements. In contrast, the landscape *In Winter* (1937) evokes morning calm and silence. The artist employed a cool, nuanced colour range with a warm yellow-pink sky and soft glazing, creating a misty effect and dissolving forms into the surrounding environment.

A completely different approach was demonstrated by the artist in *Winter Landscape* (1941), where ochre-yellow accents were used against a cool colour palette to achieve an optimistic, lifeaffirming mood (Fig. 5). This work marked the first appearance of a human figure – an element that would become essential in the artist’s later landscapes. In subsequent works, human figures were organically woven into the natural environment, as seen in *Transcarpathian Landscape* (1946) and *Landscape with a River* (1947), where human presence did not disrupt the harmony, but rather emphasised unity with nature. Sholtes perceived the relationship between humans and the landscape as part of a holistic Carpathian microcosm, in which every detail carried symbolic and spiritual meaning. Thus, the creative method of the early Sholtes was distinguished by plein air practice, experimentation with colour and light, and a combination of realistic and impressionistic techniques. His early landscapes revealed an ability to convey not only visual impressions but also a profound mood and philosophical reflection on nature as the living environment of humankind.

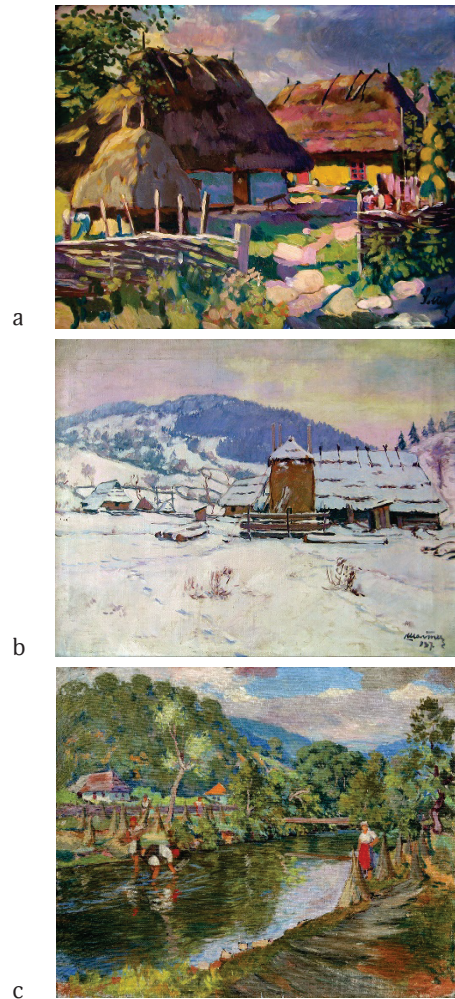


Figure 4. The lyrical intimate landscapes of the 1930s-1940s

Note: a – *Village Yard*. Canvas, oil, 70×84 cm (1936); b – *In Winter*. Canvas, oil, 80×100 cm (1937); c – *Village by the River*. Canvas, oil, 68×88 cm (1946)

Source: photo by the authors



Figure 5. *Winter Landscape*

Note: Canvas, oil, 70×84 cm (1941)

Source: photo by the authors

In the mature period of his artistic activity (1949-1990), Zoltan Sholtes’s lyrical, intimate landscapes acquired a more diverse thematic and narrative direction:

- landscape as an image of nature – a generalised, poetic vision of the surrounding environment, focused on conveying mood, harmony, and emotional state;

- “humanised” landscape – nature integrated into human everyday life: footpaths, benches, distant villages, traces of human presence;

- rural landscape – depictions of the countryside with houses, farmyards, and elements bordering on genre scenes of everyday life;

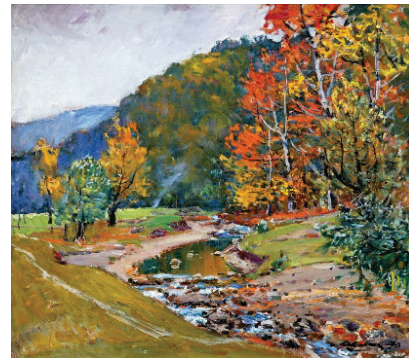
- architectural landscape – views featuring prominent architectural forms, often carrying ethnographic and historical significance, such as castles or sacred buildings.

O. Arkhypenko (2012) wrote that, when analysing a work of art, it was important to consider not only the external aspects – style, technique, or composition – but also the inner meaning, psychology, spirit, and esoteric dimensions of the work. Accordingly, the study of Zoltan Sholtes’s intimate landscapes took into account both material elements (form, colour, texture, technique) and abstract characteristics (space, balance, rhythm, harmony, energy). The analysis focused on characteristic works from different years, grouped into four typological categories: landscape as an image of nature (*Stream in the Forest* (1970); *Clear Day* (1980); *Oaks* (1989)); humanised landscape (*Evening over the River* (1958); *Autumn* (1979)); rural landscape (*Winter in Stavne* (1957); *Black Tysa* (1973)); and landscape with architectural motifs (*Danyliv Wooden Church* (1968); *Architectural Monument* (1985)).

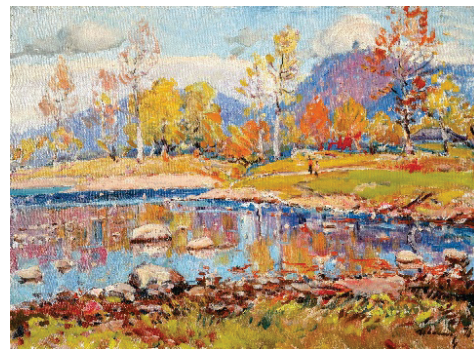
All of the studied works by Zoltan Sholtes were executed in the *alla prima* technique, with careful selection of motifs and points of view. A characteristic sequence was noticeable: sketching, applying primary colour patches, semi-transparent detailing, pasty highlights, and transparent shadows. The artist’s unique method of “modelling” with colour, without mixing tones and using repeated layers, ensured the freshness of the painting and the expressiveness of the artistic vision. This technique, developed during his student years through shared plein air sessions with J. Bokshai, remained consistent throughout his life (Filip, 2003). At the same time, in the later periods of his work, there was a noticeable increase in abstraction, more complex spatial and colour solutions, and experiments with composition, reflecting the dynamic evolution of his artistic language.

Zoltan Sholtes’s lyrical landscapes, including *Stream in the Forest* (1970), *Autumn* (1976), and *Clear Day* (1980), stood out for their intimate, chamber-like space, focusing on a single, poetically interpreted fragment of nature. The artist consciously selected closed compositions with natural motifs that invited viewers to immerse themselves in the silence and harmony of the depicted environment. Despite the absence of human figures, these corners of nature do not appear wild or alien – Sholtes masterfully created a sense of emotional inhabitation through subtle hints of human

presence: a path, haystacks, a faint wisp of smoke in the air. The landscape was presented as a deeply felt, intimate space that preserved traces of interaction with humanity (Fig. 6).



a



b



c

Figure 6. A focus on a specific, poetically interpreted fragment of nature

Note: a – *Stream in the Forest*. Canvas, oil, 90×100 cm (1970); b – *Autumn*. Canvas, oil, 65×85 cm (1976); c – *Clear Day*. Canvas, oil, 50.5×90.5 cm (1980)

Source: photo by the authors

Autumn landscapes occupied a special place in Sholtes’s lyrical works, as autumn allowed the artist to most fully express the colouristic richness, mood, and profound emotional essence of nature. Rather than a detailed depiction, Sholtes chose the path of abstraction, with the main motifs emphasised by broad colour planes and clarified by the detailing of individual elements, creating a sense of unity and depth in the image. For instance, in *Clear Day*, the dominant warm shades of green and orange not only reflected the vibrancy of autumn nature but also conveyed its emotional tone. As a result, the painting radiated light and warmth, affirm-

ing a sense of harmony and inner peace even against the backdrop of inevitable autumn decline.

A significant segment of Zoltan Sholtes's work consisted of pieces in which nature was explored in the context of integration with human existence. In these compositions, elements of landscape and genre painting were organically combined: human figures or their traces not only introduced an element of narrative but also served as a catalyst for deepening the meaning and emotional structure of the work. As H. Ostrovskiy (1974) pointed out, even with minimal figurative presence in the composition of the canvas, the idea of the natural unity of humankind and the landscape was embedded. In paintings such as *Spring in the High Carpathians* (1957), *Summer in the High Carpathians* (1968), and *Stuzhucia* (1968), human figures acted as spatial and psychological markers, intended to enhance the visual and emotional perception of the environment (Fig. 7).

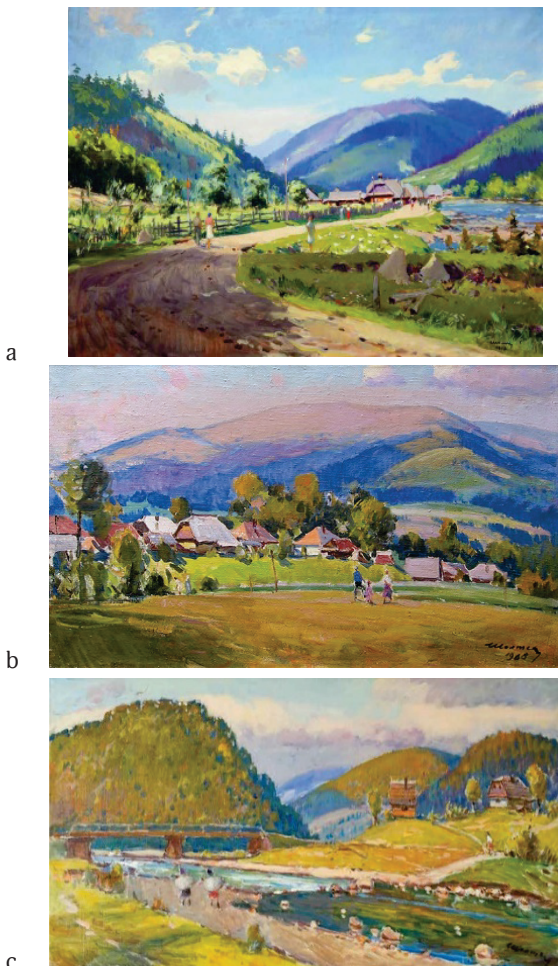


Figure 7. Humanised landscape

Note: a – *Spring in the High Carpathians*. Canvas, oil (1957); b – *Summer in the High Carpathians*. Canvas, oil, 60×99.5 cm (1968); c – *Stuzhucia*. Canvas, oil, 51.5×116.5 cm (1968)

Source: photo by the authors

A particularly illustrative example is the painting *Summer in the High Carpathians*, where the space is structured using four roughly horizontal planes, ensuring a gradual visual immersion for the viewer. The central part of the composition, where a group of trees and houses is concentrated, is highlighted with a rich colour palette that enhances the sense of movement and depth. The three figures on the path do not play a dominant role, but they create an important spatial accent, essential in a composition where the logic of colour prevails over that of tone.

The next thematic layer of Zoltan Sholtes's work consisted of landscape scenes depicting rural life, where the architecture of the village – homes, streets – became the compositional axis of the image. As the artist himself noted, these motifs were most characteristic of his worldview (Ostrovskiy, 1974). Intimate in mood and lyrical in content, these works convey the distinctive spiritual atmosphere of the Transcarpathian microcosm, embodying the idea of the inseparable unity of nature, humanity, and the cultural environment. Notable examples of this aspect of Sholtes's work include *Winter in Stavne* (1957) and *Village in the Mountains* (1979). These paintings not only reflect the aesthetic principles of Sholtes's creativity, but also his deep emotional experience of the rural landscape as a source of continuous creative inspiration. For the artist, the village was not an idyllic space of peace but a field for continuous reflection and experimentation with colour and light effects (Fig. 8).



Figure 8. Rural landscape

Note: a – *Winter in Stavne*. Canvas, oil, 72×100 cm (1957); b – *Village in the Mountains*. Canvas, oil, 84.5×120 cm (1979)

Source: photo by the authors

The painting *Winter in Stavne* (1957) is a vivid example of spatial depth, luminosity, and exquisite colour harmony, characteristic of Sholtes's winter landscapes. As many critics noted, it was in his winter compositions that Sholtes fully manifested his mastery as a colourist. For instance, O. Moshay (1989) observed, "... few Transcarpathians can compare to him in feeling and reproducing the snow-covered Carpathian landscapes, filled with fresh air and bright sunlight". The colour composition of *Winter in Stavne* was based on a complex combination of pure and reflective colours: the bright whiteness of the snow in the foreground contrasted with warm glimmers and cool half-shadows, creating the effect of festive clarity on a winter's day. In the deeper layers of the composition, the palette became more complex: warm purple resonated with yellow-orange shades, while the madder and olive-ochre hues of the rooftops and fences added depth and richness to the colour scheme. The compositional structure also merits attention: the lower part of the canvas is an almost empty snow-covered field with delicate shadows, while the upper part is filled with architectural and natural motifs that create the focal point of the image. As O. Arkhyenko (2012) observed, the individuality of the artist is revealed through the strengthening of his distinctive plastic means. For Sholtes, this dominant feature was the delicate harmonisation of colour relationships, which formed a unique "linguistic intonation" in the visual representation of the Transcarpathian world.

A distinctive group in Zoltan Sholtes's work consisted of landscapes with architectural motifs, where buildings acted as self-sufficient compositional elements. Unlike generalised rural huts, these works captured masterpieces of Transcarpathian wooden architecture – churches, bell towers, and fortifications. Often, the artist repeatedly revisited the same motif, experimenting with colour and light depending on the time of day or season: the *Sturkivska Church in Yasinya* (1970, 1974, 1982, 1989), churches in *Oleksandrivka*, *Urmeziv* (Rus'ke Pole), *Bukovets*, *Uzhhorod Castle*, and castles in *Nevyt'ske* and *Mukachevo*. Sholtes's architectural landscapes also held ethnographic significance, as they documented objects that no longer exist. An example is the wooden Church of St Nicholas in Rus'ke Pole (17th century), which was destroyed in 1965. Sholtes managed to capture it in several sketches in the early 1960s, although he completed them decades later, which aligned with his usual creative practice. The landscapes with the motif of the churches in Rus'ke Pole (1986, 1989) demonstrate the artist's ability to achieve emotional expressiveness through colour, light, and composition (Fig. 9).

The summer study of 1986 stands out with its warm palette and life-affirming play of light on a sunlit meadow, contrasted with the heavy grey mass of the sky. At the same time, the winter work *Monument of Wooden Architecture* (1989) has a troubling, dramatic character: the composition is built on the relationship between

transparent, almost graphic silhouettes of the church and trees against a multi-layered, cold sky. The grey snow in the foreground intensifies the overall feeling of inevitability. A significant role is played by the rhythmic echoes of forms: church crosses and tree branches create a unified system, enhancing the emotional tone of the works. Thus, the main artistic means of achieving emotional expression in these landscapes were well-considered colour schemes, contrasts of tone and temperature, variations in painting techniques (transparent strokes vs. impasto strokes), and rhythmic organisation of the compositional space.



Figure 9. Architectural landscapes capturing objects that no longer exist

Note: a – Architectural Monument. Canvas, oil, 50.5×70 cm (1986); b – Monument of Wooden Architecture. Canvas, oil, 51×70.8 cm (1989)

Source: photo by the authors

One of the leading architectural motifs in Zoltan Sholtes's work was the Church of the Ascension of the Lord in Yasinya (*Strukivska Church*) – a notable Monument of Wooden Architecture in Transcarpathia (Fig. 10). The perfection of proportions, form, and texture of the church and bell tower created a harmonious ensemble closely linked to the spiritual and daily life of the community. The study of this monument required the artist not only to carry out a careful analysis of the architecture but also to gain a deep understanding of its sacred essence. In the painting *Church in Yasinya* (1970), Sholtes depicted a harsh winter atmosphere, building the colour palette on contrasts between complementary colours. The saturated range is softened through the interpenetration of colours and their scattering in the air. The lack

of active lighting is compensated for by a three-tiered composition: the empty foreground and the sky draw attention to the central architectural ensemble. The spatial solution embodied profound symbolism: the earth as the pure canvas of human life, the sky as the divine sphere, and the church and bell tower as intermediaries between them. The stately quality of the composition and the silhouette of Hoverla highlighted the idea of the immutability of spiritual values. In the work *Strukivska Church* (1974), another emotional state was conveyed: the sunny day dictated a bright, open colour scheme and an optimistic mood. At the same time, the artist consciously departed from atmospheric perspective: the intensity of colour was maintained across all planes, emphasising the decorativeness of the composition and the integrity of the sacred space's image.



a



b

Figure 10. The motif of the Strukivska Church in the village of Yasinya

Note: a – Church in Yasinya. Canvas, oil, 49.4×79.5 cm (1970); b – Strukivska Church. Canvas, oil, 99×125 cm (1974)

Source: photo by the authors

Zoltan Sholtes also turned to urban themes, particularly the architectural landmarks of Uzhhorod and Mukachevo. Various depictions of Uzhhorod Castle demonstrated differences in the artist's creative method when working in urban settings compared with rural areas. The compositional scheme and viewpoint remained constant across all works – the northern side from Podhradska Street, which provided the best view of the tectonic qualities of the architectural masses. The chosen viewpoint allowed the artist to emphasise the steep slope, defensive walls, and the monumentality of the architectural complex. In three works, the castle was

depicted in winter, but despite the compositional similarity and the same season, Sholtes avoided repetition in colour, light-tonal solutions, and emotional tone. The most finished work is *Uzhhorod Castle* (1974), executed in a cold palette with accents of warm ochre (Fig. 11). The artist delicately conveyed nuances of colour, the vibration of cold air, and the texture of snow. The composition was characteristic of Sholtes: a lowered viewpoint, a high horizon, and a horizontal division of space with the traditionally empty foreground. The main emotional element was the sky, which, despite occupying only a small part of the canvas, defined the mood of the work through a soft gradient from warm to cold blue, accented by warm clouds. In the 1976 work, while maintaining the compositional structure, the colour solution changed: a warmer palette and more active use of aerial perspective created an effect of dreaminess and tranquillity. The palace structure almost dissolved into the atmosphere of the sunset, conveying the dampness and freshness of a frosty evening.



a



b

Figure 11. The architectural landscape

Note: a – Uzhhorod Castle. Canvas, oil, 75×105 cm (1974); b – Uzhhorod Castle in Winter. Canvas, oil, 70×90 cm (1976)

Source: photo by the authors

The motifs of Mukachevo Castle had a different emotional direction. In the works of 1959 and 1971, the architectural structure was depicted against the backdrop of a bright summer day. Sholtes used an expanded light palette dominated by olive-yellow, salad green, ochre-silver, and blue tones. The use of backlighting allowed the artist to convey the intensity of colour in light and shadow. The composition was filled with light and air, combining the solemnity and plasticity of architec-

tural forms with the vibrant poetics of the landscape. In the 1971 work, the castle was depicted in the background, shifting the emphasis from architecture to the integrity of the environment. The architectural form was rendered with less plastic emphasis; instead, the artist integrated it into the landscape, creating a balance between space and mass through colour and tone. Through impressionistic techniques of capturing fleeting impressions and emotions, Z. Sholtes merged objective reality with subjective experience (Fig. 12).

The analysis of Z. Sholtes's intimate landscapes revealed that the main artistic and stylistic methods employed were realism with detailed compositions; impressionistic landscape studies with the generalisation of forms; and colour-textural expressionism in the construction of landscape imagery, where the emotional characteristics of colour and painterly texture dominated. The artist's creative method in these works fully aligned with the general plein air practice characteristic of Transcarpathian painters – his contemporaries. This approach was employed by A. Kotska, E. Konratovych, A. Boretskyi, and A. Kashshay, and it was precisely this method that defined the specificity of the local school of painting, which combined a profound sensitivity to nature, attentiveness to the conditions of light, colour, and texture, as well as a striving for emotional generalisation of the image. The stylistic means inherent to Sholtes – a synthesis of realism, impressionism, and expressionism – also formed the basis of the artistic language of E. Konratovych, A. Boretskyi, and I. Shutyev. In contrast, Z. Sholtes rarely resorted to formalist experimentation or decorative stylisation, as was typical of A. Kashshay or G. Gluck. At the same time, this

selective use of stylistic tools emphasised the artist's particular focus on profound emotional expression, which distinguished him from other representatives of the local school. Lyricism in the artist's work manifested at several levels: composition, colour palette, texture, and painting technique (Table 2).



Figure 12. The motif of Mukachevo Castle
Note: a – Mukachevo Castle. Canvas, oil, 70×90 cm (1959);
 b – Mukachevo Castle. Canvas, oil, 70×90 cm (1971)
Source: photo by the authors

Table 2. Artistic-stylistic methods of working on landscape and levels of lyricism expression

Realism with detailed compositions	Levels of lyricism expression	Composition level	Predominance of intimate, chamber-like motifs (cosy village streets, natural corners without vast panoramas), creating an impression of personal, emotional contemplation of the world
Impressionistic landscape studies with form generalisation		Level of colour scheme	Use of soft, nuanced tonal transitions, warm autumn or fresh winter colour schemes, conveying the changing states of nature and the emotional mood of the artist
Colour-textural expressionism		Level of texture	Delicate brushwork, light impressionistic, transparent or impasto accents, which convey the lively mobility of light and air

Source: developed by the authors

The identified patterns of artistic-stylistic techniques in Z. Sholtes' intimate landscapes provided grounds for refining the characteristics of this genre in Ukrainian art of the second half of the 20th century, ensuring a comprehensive exploration of the nature of lyricism and creating a methodological foundation for further analysis of the visual language of Transcarpathian landscapes. In the scholarly art-historical discourse, the name of Zoltan Sholtes was mentioned in individual studies devoted to the Transcarpathian school of painting; however, most publications present his artistic work merely as part of this school.

Researcher H. Ostrovskiy (1974) presented a broad overview of the region's visual arts and devoted attention to Z. Sholtes, though somewhat biasedly characterised him primarily as a realist. I. Nebesnyk (2005) provided brief factual information about the artist's life and creative activity. I. Lutsenko (2014) focused on the ideological and creative foundations of the Transcarpathian school of painting, mentioning Z. Sholtes only in passing as one of its representatives. Biographical aspects of the artist's life and creative path, along with commentaries on his paintings, were provided in the studies of L. Popova (1999) and V. Shtets (2009). More detailed

information on his artistic achievements can be found in periodical publications, as well as in prefaces to catalogues and brochures accompanying his solo exhibitions. The overview nature of articles by scholars, which covered certain stages of the artist's creative activity, did not provide a thorough scholarly assessment of his work. For example, H. Bykova (1971) provided a complete list of the exhibited works, expanding the understanding of Z. Sholtes's exhibition activity, although without offering any analytical commentary. In an accompanying article for a later exhibition, O. Moshay (1989) mentioned Sholtes's portrait work and expressed regret over the limitation of his creative range to landscape painting. The article by L. Filip (2003), written on the occasion of the opening of Z. Sholtes's memorial room at the Transcarpathian Regional Museum, included biographical information and recollections about the artist from his contemporaries. However, the content-related and stylistic features of his painting still remain insufficiently explored and require more detailed theoretical analysis. In this regard, it became necessary to identify those aspects of his artistic practice and to interpret the personality of Z. Sholtes not only as a typical representative of a regional school, but also as an artist with a distinct creative stance and his own system of figurative thinking. The study of his legacy in the contemporary context may contribute to a deeper understanding of the development of Ukrainian art.

Conclusions

As a result of the study, it was determined that Zoltan Sholtes conveyed not only the objective features of nature, but also its emotional and spiritual dimensions. The stylistic and technical diversity revealed in the realist-impressionist synthesis reflects the artist's flexibility in searching for expressive means to achieve the desired artistic effect. The study revealed that, in contrast to the treatment of nature in epic landscapes – characterised by expansive compositions, a high horizon line, a top-down viewpoint, universal imagery, and the grandeur of nature – Sholtes's lyrical chamber landscapes were marked by limited composition, detailed treatment set against generalised backgrounds, the poetics of everyday subjects, and an idyllic tone. The artist frequently returned to variations of the same motifs and locations, each time subtly conveying a different atmosphere – reflecting seasonal changes, time of day, weather conditions, or psychological mood. This

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demonstrated the artist's ability to transform real natural phenomena into symbolic images imbued with inner meaning. In Sholtes's interpretation, the lyrical landscape emerged as a genre that transcended the mere depiction of visual reality, becoming an instrument of profound aesthetic and spiritual reflection on the world. This was manifested through four general thematic lines: landscape as an image of nature; the "humanised" landscape; the rural landscape; and the architectural landscape. Each artwork represented not only contemplation of nature, but also its personal interpretation – an emotional projection of the artist's inner self. Sholtes's attention to the quality of light, subtle colour nuances, plasticity of line, and the textural richness of the brushstroke attested to the depth of internal engagement with each image. In such an approach, the landscape ceased to be a mere backdrop and became a self-sufficient bearer of meaning and emotion. It acted as a mediator between the external and the internal, the natural and the human, the rational and the emotional. The analysis of Sholtes's artistic language made it possible to propose new didactic approaches to teaching landscape painting. The study of his legacy highlighted the importance of observation, emotional sensitivity, analytical thinking, and the formation of an individual style. This experience was valuable both in the context of understanding local painting traditions and within the broader academic and educational discourse on artistic expression.

Future research perspectives may include a comparative study of Sholtes's pictorial language with that of other representatives of the Transcarpathian school of painting, particularly in the context of the lyrical landscape, as well as an iconographic interpretation of recurring motifs in his works as symbols shaping the artist's personal worldview. Another promising direction is the development of methodological materials based on his artistic legacy for teaching landscape painting in higher art education.

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Ліричні аспекти у камерних пейзажах Золтана Шолтеса

■ **Анотація.** Актуальність дослідження полягає у необхідності глибшого розуміння внеску Золтана Шолтеса у формування закарпатської школи живопису. Попри значний інтерес до закарпатської школи, окремі аспекти творчості Шолтеса залишилися недостатньо дослідженими. Метою цього дослідження було виокремлення визначальних рис пейзажного живопису Шолтеса та аналіз художніх засобів і концептуальних підходів, що формували емоційний зміст камерних творів митця. У ході дослідження встановлено, що основними напрямками у пейзажному мистецтві Золтана Шолтеса були ліричні пейзажі як зображення природи, «олюднені» пейзажі, сільські пейзажі та архітектурні пейзажі. Особлива увага приділялася емоційному виміру його робіт, у яких природа набувала символічного значення та відображала внутрішні стани людської душі. У дослідженні підкреслено відмінності між ліричними камерними пейзажами Шолтеса та його епічними панорамними композиціями з акцентом на композиційні, колористичні та технічні засоби, які художник застосовував для передачі глибокого емоційного змісту. Ключовими художньо-стилістичними підходами у його творчості виступали реалізм із детальною композицією; імпресіонізм із узагальненням форми, а також колірно-текстурний експресіонізм, де домінували емоційні якості кольору та насичені мальовничі фактури. Ліричний пейзаж у творчості Шолтеса постав не лише як жанрова форма, а й як філософський інструмент для осмислення природи та внутрішнього світу людини. Завдяки застосуванню різноманітних композиційних, колористичних і технічних прийомів митець надав своїм творам глибини та багатозначності. Отримані результати сприяли глибшому розумінню естетичних та мистецьких принципів закарпатської школи й підкреслили значущість індивідуального стилю Шолтеса в художніх процесах ХХ століття. Практична цінність цього дослідження виявляється у мистецтвознавстві, де досвід митця може слугувати прикладом для створення методів передачі емоційної складової пейзажного живопису

■ **Ключові слова:** закарпатська школа живопису; творчий метод; художня мова; композиція; ліризм; інтимність; пленер