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Why There Are Great Women Artists in Ukrainian Art. — K. : Publish Pro, 2019. — 224 p.
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The book *Why There Are Great Women Artists in Ukrainian Art* marks one of the first attempts to tell the history of Ukrainian art through the lens of gender, covering the period from the end of the 19th century to the artistic experiments of the early 21st century. This story is made up of unknown pages from biographies of Ukrainian female artists, where one can see the names of those who have been forgotten or remain little known to the general public along with those of the key figures of Ukrainian art.

The book shows how the possibilities of creative self-fulfillment by female and male artists changed over time, how the artists overcame the obstacles on the way to professional recognition, and how the awareness of bodily experience was transformed in their work. The archival documents dealing with the role and place of women in art, which we have collected, are particularly valuable.

This book is not recommended for minors.

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FOREWORD

In the Ukranian masculine dominated art world, the position of women and their importance has long been neglected. Throughout the 20th century their social role and artistic identifiable language has radically changed. Changes that more often than not, reflected societies gender-thinking throughout time.

Today, that masculine dominance is, if not broken, cracked. Since the early 2000, and more visually present, since the start if the PinchukArtCentre prize, young Ukraininan female artists take the lead. They win prizes and enjoy a wide international representation and respect.

While this book illus trates this path to recognition, it is more than a mere gender story. It tackles the subject through the experience and thinking of body. It attempts to embrace the different sides of female artists throughout the last century in Ukraine. Giving voice to those who were muted while contextualising practices of those speaking up today.

Bjorn Geldhof

A CRITICAL

PERSPECTIVE

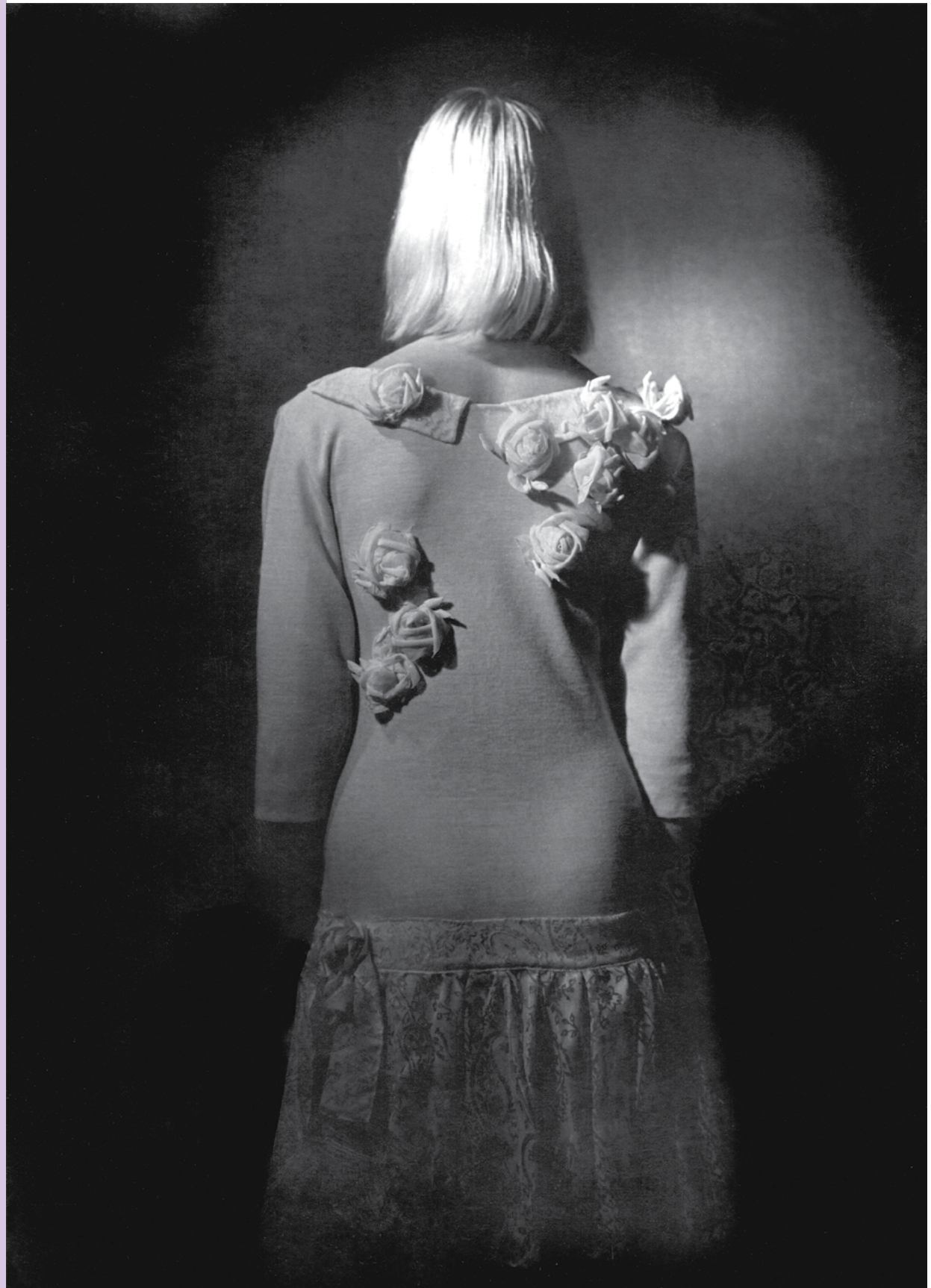
Why There Are Great Women Artists in Ukrainian Art

KATERYNA IAKOVLENKO

The title of this article is a paraphrase of the American researcher Linda Nochlin's critical text *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?*, published in 1971 in the journal *ArtNews*.[1] Analyzing the social status of the woman artist and the conditions and possibilities for education and the implementation of creative ideas, the author explained why a woman had not been represented for a long time in the artistic world, which was a closed white male community. Nochlin wrote her article in the era of the feminist movement in the US art when exhibitions and events aimed at promoting themes related to the emancipation of women in society. For example, the WIA (Women in the Arts) organization was created in 1971 and held an exhibition of 109 women artists at the New York Cultural Center. In the same year, Miriam Shapiro and Judy Chicago held the "Womanhouse" exhibition. Meanwhile, in the USSR, this period is known as the years of political "stagnation." Volodymyr Shcherbytsky was then the General Secretary of the Ukrainian SSR in Kyiv, and he "waged a consistent struggle" with "separatists."[2] It was on his watch that one of the most brilliant artists of that time, Alla Horska (1929–1970), was killed because of her political convictions. This article is an attempt to review and conceptualize the history of Ukrainian art from the beginning of the 20th century to these days through works and biographies of artists.

1 Nochlin, Linda. "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" (1971) // *Women Artists. The Linda Nochlin Reader* (Ed. by Maura Reily). – Thames & Hudson, 2015. – P. 42-69.

2 Medvedev, Vadim. *V komande Gorbacheva: vzglyad iznutri* [On Gorbachev's Team: A View from Within]. – Moscow: Bylina, 1994. – P. 120. [in Russian]



Valeriia Troubina on the set during the filming of Kyrylo Protsenko's Yes. 1992. Photo by Ihor Kryvinsky

EDUCATION, THE MODERN, AND CLASS INEQUALITY

The tradition of feminist analysis and conceptualization of the woman's role and place came to visual arts through the literary tradition. Strong literary and critical schools, unlike the school of art studies, developed ideas and discussed various manifestations of the modernist tradition. For example, great names entered literature as "modernists" — women writers who claimed their right to expand the space of "their own room," such as Lesia Ukrainka and Olha Kobylianska. Were one to ask if there were any women artists amongst such female progressives, they would be unable to receive an obvious answer, unfortunately. The most striking figures of that time were Mariia Bashkyrtseva (1858–1884) and Augusta Kochanowska (1866–1927), best known as the author of a diary depicting the bohemian life of Paris and a companion of Olha Kobylianska respectively.

Poltava-born Mariia Bashkyrtseva came from an aristocratic family. Her father served as Marshal of Nobility in the Poltava Governorate, and her mother came from a Kharkiv-based noble family. The Bashkyrtsevs moved to France when Mary was 12. In Paris, she studied art and entered the intellectual circles of that European capital.

Augusta Kochanowska was born in Bukovina to a German-speaking Polish family. Her father occupied the position of district chief in the town of Campulung in Southern Bukovina (currently in Romania). Kochanowska's first painting lessons were obtained privately. She subsequently moved to Vienna, where, according to Tetiana Duhaieva's research, she studied art at the Vienna University of Applied Arts under the supervision of Franz Matsch.[3] Kochanowska often visited Bukovina, where she worked on her paintings and sketches. While on her sketching trips, Kochanowska made notes on the life of Bukovinians, focusing on women's rights situation and everyday life.[4] The artist moved to Western Europe for good in the early 1920s, her works were exhibited in Vienna from 1923–1926.[5]

In 1915, Kochanowska tried to obtain a permit to join a group of military artists in the front-line zone.[6] A draft of Kochanowska's letter to that effect, written in German, has been preserved in the Central State Archive and the Museum of Literature and Arts. We do not know for sure whether the letter had been ever sent, and what answer was received by the artist. No trip to the front-line zone is mentioned in her biography.

The lack of access to the front-line areas was a gender-based restriction that had nothing to do with one's professional qualities or actual ability to work in dangerous conditions. Like most such "rules," it thwarted women artists' creative ambitions and pushed them out of the "elite" or "professional" circle of artists.

3 Duhaieva, Tetiana. "Avhusta Kokhanovska – yaskrava zirka na mysteckomu nebokhyli Bukovyny. Znakhidky ta utochnennia vazhlyvykh detalei biohrafii" [Augusta Kochanowska – a Bright Star in Bukovina's Artistic Sky. New Finds and Clarifications of Important Details of Her Life] // *Versii*. – September 27 – October 3, 2018. – No. 39. – P. 6-7. [In Ukrainian]

4 See: Avhusta Kokhanovska. *Z kolektsiii Chernivetskoho oblasnoho khudozhnioho muzeiu* [Augusta Kochanowska. From the Collection of the Chernivtsi Regional Museum of Arts]. – Chernivtsi: Bukrek, 2013. [In Ukrainian]

5 Duhaieva, Tetiana. "Avhusta Kokhanovska – yaskrava zirka na mysteckomu nebokhyli Bukovyny. Znakhidky ta utochnennia vazhlyvykh detalei biohrafii" [Augusta Kochanowska – a Bright Star in Bukovina's Artistic Sky. New Finds and Clarifications of Important Details of Her Life] // *Versii*. – September 27 – October 3, 2018. – No. 39. – P. 6-7. [In Ukrainian]

6 See: "Application for permission to engage in painting from nature in the front-line zone" [Draft] // TsDAMLM [The Central State Archives and Museum of Literature and Arts] of Ukraine. Fond 309. Opys 1. Sprava 129. [In German]

Oksana Pavlenko and a group of students with their landlady. Cherkasy. The CSAMLA [Central State Archives and Museum of Literature and Arts] of Ukraine. Fond 356. Opys 1. Sprava 348.

Hanna Sobachko-Shostak. Flower Radish. 1912. Watercolor on paper.
Photo courtesy of the National Museum of Ukrainian Decorative Folk Art

Both Bashkyrtseva and Kochanowska came from wealthy families, had the opportunity to study abroad, and stayed in the midst of Western Europe intellectual life. However, could such a life be accessible to a woman of the "proletarian" origin, or one coming from a peasant family? Was there a place for modernist currents and ideas in the Ukrainian village?

In her description of the modernist motifs in Ukrainian embroidery, art historian Tetiana Kara-Vasylieva analyzed the works of the artist and instructor of a women's art and crafts school, Yevhenia Pribylskaya, and her pupil Hanna Sobachko-Shostak.[7] Pribylskaya (1987–1948) studied at the Kyiv School of Painting, painted mostly landscapes, and became interested in the folk art in 1906. In 1910, Pribylskaya became artistic director of a teaching and demonstration studio in the village of Skobtsi, Poltava Governorate (now Kyiv Oblast), which was established in the estate of Anastasiia Semyhradova.[8] Subsequently, she came to head other arts and crafts schools, collected and popularized folk handicraft art.[9]
Her list of contacts included Aleksandra Ekster, Vadim Meller, and Vera Mukhina. Pribylskaya moved to Moscow in the 1920s, but continued to correspond with "her" peasant artists and supply them with artistic consumables (ink, paper, paints) and money. The "craftspeople" responded by sending their paintings, so Pribylskaya's collection grew.

> Pribylskaya wrote in her autobiography that for thirty-five years, she devoted her efforts to "collecting samples of peasant creative oeuvre and launching production of genuinely folk-inspired products, both ancient and contemporary, and promoting it in the press and through exhibitions. Improving the quality of handicraft textile products by the work with craftspeople at production facilities, consulting young artists, personally drawing patterns, and working on export procurement through orders.[...] I do detailed research on folk art and study lace, embroidery, and carpet weaving."[10]

Kara-Vasylieva describes an innovative approach used by Pribylskaya after a trip to Paris, where she became acquainted with European art.[11] Under the influence of her teacher, the peasant artist Sobachko-Shostak also demonstrated the innovative modernist approach. Her art practice transformed as she turned away from embroidery and towards painting.

7 Kara-Vasylieva, Tetiana. "Styl modern u mystetstvi ukrainskoii vyshyvky" [The Art Nouveau Style in the Ukrainian Embroidery Art] // *Ukraiinska akademia mystetstva. Doslidnytski ta naukovo-metodychni pratsi. Spetsvypusk* [The Ukrainian Academy of Fine Arts. Research and Methodological Works. A Special Issue.]. – Kyiv: The National Academy of Fine Arts and Architecture, 2010. – P. 121-122. [In Ukrainian]

8 "Yevheniya Ivanovna Pribylskaya" // *Virtualny muzey Nadezhdy Petrovny Lamanovoy* [The Virtual Museum of Nadezhda PetrovnaLamanova] [Electronic Source]. – Retrieved from: http://lamanova.com/16_pribilskaya.html [In Russian]

9 The term "handicraft art" denoted the art created by small producers-cum-artists (such people were called "handicraftspeople") mainly with their own hands and intending to sell products . The term is used interchangeably with "folk art." See: Lunacharsky, Anatoly. "Ob iskusstve. Russkoye sovetskoye iskusstvo" [On Art. The Russian Soviet Art] / Lunacharsky, Anatoly. *Sobraniye sochineniy* [Collected Works]. Vol. 2. – Moscow.: Iskusstvo, 1982. [In Russian]

10 Pribylskaya , Yevheniya. "Zhizneopisaniye" [My Life] Private archive, Kyiv, Tsit. Quoted in: *Ukrainskiye avangardisty kak teoretiki i publitsisty* [Ukrainian Avant-Gardists as Theorists and Essayists] / Edited by Dmytro Horbachov, Olena and Serhii Palet. – Kyiv: Triumf, 2005. [In Russian]

11 Kara-Vasylieva, Tetiana. "Styl modern u mystetstvi ukrainskoi vyshyvky" [The Art Nouveau Style in the Ukrainian Embroidery Art] // *Ukrainska akademia mystetstva. Doslidnytski ta naukovo-metodychni pratsi. Spetsvypusk* [The Ukrainian Academy of Fine Arts. Research and Methodological Works. A Special Issue.]. – Kyiv: The National Academy of Fine Arts and Architecture, 2010. – P. 121-122. [In Ukrainian]

The Ukrainian art historian sees Sobachko-Shostak's modernist approach in the artist's lines and contours. Quoting an article from *Radianske Mystetsvoznavstvo* magazine, Kara-Vasylieva notes the importance of lines: "The very act of turning the line into a carrier of universal expressiveness becomes an indicator of the new modernist language's conditionality. This conditionality is present at all levels of the artistic structure, starting with themes and iconography."[12] And while Sobachko-Shostak's line was intuitive in character, the contemporary artist Anna Zvyagintseva has the line itself becoming a "thinking entity":

> "I often unpick the very idea of a pictorial line, turning it into a thinking line... For me, the idea of a picture is related to how one thinks."[13]

Such historical parallels between artists' practices should not in any way be regarded as reflecting conscious historical continuity, but rather as an author's commentary.

Quality education that provided knowledge about art and the possibility of getting involved in intellectual debates is one of the important points that Linda Nochlin pays attention to in her article. This aspect is no less important for the Ukrainian artistic context. For example, could Sobachko-Shostak develop as a painter, if not for her teacher Pribylskaya, who was well-versed not only in Soviet art but also in Western art? Could, say, Maya Deren achieve self-realization in Ukraine?[14] Today, her video works are exhibited in world museums as examples of experimental and avant-garde art. Or, could the photographer Sofia Yablonska-Oudin, who until recently was known only as a writer, realize her artistic talent in Ukraine in the early 20th century?[15] In 1927, she left Ukraine for France, where she first worked as a camera operator for the French company Optorg-Yunan-Fou and then came to travel around the world, writing essays on her voyages and photographing the lives of residents of Morocco, China, Vietnam, and other countries. Yablonska's documentary legacy coincides in time with the creative development of well-known avant-garde directors of the beginning of the 20th century — Dziga Vertov and Mikhail Kaufman. They worked at the All-Ukrainian Photo-Cinema Administration (VUFKU) which operated in Odesa and Kyiv, and from 1927 in Yalta. At that time, it was impossible to find a female camera operator, film director, or a photographer in Ukraine who would be as well-known in the cinema community.

At a group picture of the 1927 class of the Department of Theater, Photography, and Film at the Kyiv Art Institute, which was presented to Ivan Vrona, one can discern a single woman among twenty men (including Nikolai Triaskin and Viktor Palmov).[16] Meanwhile, the search in the systematic index of the Kino magazine provides the

12 Ibid. – P. 122.

13 Iakovlenko, Katerina. "Khudozhnitsa Anna Zvyagintseva: 'Ya ne znayu, sushchestvuet li kievskaya shkola'" [Artist Anna Zvyahintseva: "I Do Not Know if There Is a Kyiv School"] // *Bird in Flight* [Electronic source]. – January 9, 2018. – Retrieved from: https://birdinflight.com/portret/20180109-anna-zvyagintseva.html [In Russian]

14 Maya Deren (1917, Kyiv - 1961, New York) was an American film director of Ukrainian origin. She received a Bachelor of Political Science degree from New York University.

15 Sophia Yablonska (Jablonska)-Uden (1907, Hermaniv, Lviv region – 1971, France) was a Ukrainian writer, camera operator, and photographer. Her detailed biography and associated photographs can be found in the book *Teura. Sophia Yablonska* (photo album). – Kyiv: Rodovid, 2018. [In Ukrainian]

16 Koshuba-Volvach, Olena. "Do publikatsii 'Kratkogo zhizneopisaniya N. Triaskina' (komentar ta pidhotovka dokumenta do druku)" [On the Publication of "N. Trjaskin's Brief Biography" (comments and preparation of the document for publication)] // Ukrainska akademia mystetstva. *Doslidnytski ta naukovo-metodychni pratsi. Spetsvypusk* [The Ukrainian Academy of Fine Arts. Research and Methodological Works. A Special Issue]. – Kyiv: The National Academy of Fine Arts and Architecture, 2010. – P. 74. [In Ukrainian]

Antonina Ivanova in the class of Eberling in St. Petersburg. 1912.
The CSAMLA of Ukraine. Fond 355. Opys 1. Sprava 68

information about female directors from Odesa and Kyiv, Olha Ulitska and Mechyislava Mayevskaya, as well as mentions of film directors Vera Stroyeva *(The Man outside His Case)*, Oleksandra Smyrnova (1896-?), Lyudmyla Snezhinska *(Maybe Tomorrow, together with Dmitry Dalsky)*, V. Rutkovska, and Tatyana Lukashevich *(Nursing the Sick)*.[17] O. Kosovska wrote in the text *The Woman Filmmaker Speaks* that women would claim new ground in the film art with greater confidence:

> "Now, we want to go beyond doing as told, we want to create on our own as well. We do not want to be mere implementers anymore, for, we want to learn to organize things."[18]

REVOLUTION, FREEDOM AND THE WOMAN WITH EQUAL RIGHTS

When talking about education, we cannot avoid mentioning the creation of the Academy of Arts in Kyiv.[19] The establishment of this institution is associated with political and social changes. 1917 was a "Sturm und Drang time", a highly intense historical period, full of political events, revolutions, and cultural reforms. The founders of the Academy were outstanding artists of that time: Vasyl Krychevsky, Mykhailo Boichuk, Heorhii Narbut, Abram Manevich, Fedir Krychevsky, Oleksandr Murashko, Mykhailo Zhuk, and Mykola Burachek, while Vadym Pavlovsky and Dmytro Antonovych were among its initiators. Texts, documents, and testimonies of that time provide, against expectation, some isolated bits of information about the role of women and sisterhood, namely about the creation of the Academy's Ladies Committee. According to Olena Koshuba-Volvach, the wife of Narbut was a member of the committee: "We can assume that Mykhailo Hrushevsky's wife Mariia joined them too since she dealt with issues related to the founding of the Ukrainian Academy of Arts since the summer [the summer of 1917]. Having been an active figure in the women's movement in Galicia, she had a great experience in organizing exhibition projects, took part in the founding of the Shevchenko Scientific Society Museum in Lviv, and initiated the creation of a family collection of Ukrainian antiquities."[20]

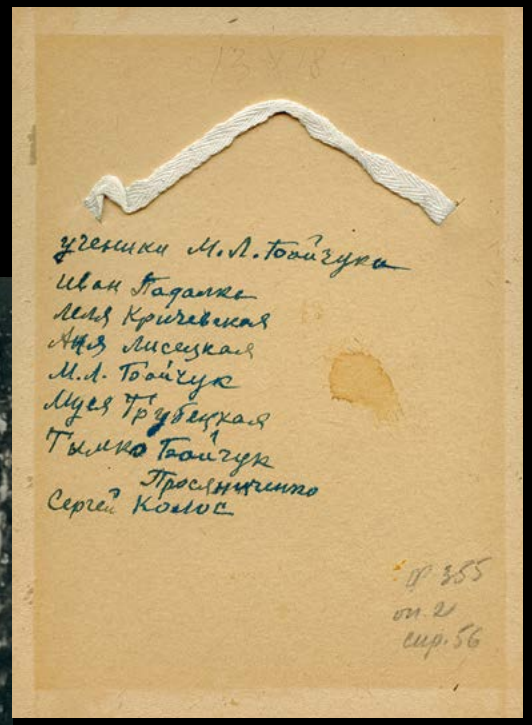
Kateryna Antonovych [the wife of Dmytro Antonovych], an artist and one of the first students of the academy, mentions in her memoirs an episode related to the formation of that educational institution. Describing the history of its establishment, the woman depicts a turbulent situation prevailing in 1917 and preventing the Central Rada from approving the statute of the academy, which put its very existence at risk.

17 Olga Ulitskaya (1902-1978) was a director of newsreels, documentary and popular science films. S he graduated from Odesa Film School in 1929. She worked as an assistant director on the films *A Mill on the Edge of the Woods* (1927) and *The Dark Kingdom* (1929), directed the films *Real Life* (1930, in collaboration with A. Gavronsky), *The Lame Girl* (1930, in collaboration with A. Gavronsky and Y. Vinokurov), *Love* (1933, in collaboration with A. Gavrovsky), and *The Ataman of Codri* (1958, in collaboration with M. Kalik and B. Rytsarev).
Mechyslava Mayevskaya (1904, Warsaw – October 12, 1975, Kyiv) was a Ukrainian film director. She worked at the Odesa Film Factory of the VUFKU (1927–1940), the Tashkent Film Studio (1941–1947), the SoyuzDetFilm (1947–1952), and the Kyiv Film Studio (1952–1962).

18 Kosovska, O. "Zhinka-filmar hovoryt: [pro ovolodinnia zhinkamy praktychno vsima kinoprofesiiamy]" [The Woman Filmmaker Speaks: [about women mastering virtually all cinema roles] // *Kino* [Cinema], 1930. – No. 5 (77), March. - P. 2: 2 photos. [In Ukrainian]

19 Currently, the National Academy of Fine Arts and Architecture (NAOMA).

20 Koshuba-Volvach, Olena. "Zasnuvannia Ukrainskoi akademii mystetstv: Berezen 1917 – hruden 1917 r." [Foundation of the Ukrainian Academy of Arts: March 1917 - December 1917] / *Ukrainska akademiia mystetstv: istoriia zasnuvannia ta fundatory* [The Ukrainian Academy of Arts: A History of Founding and Founders]. – Kyiv: Rodovid, 2015. - P. 48. [In Ukrainian]



Students of Mykhailo Boichuk: Ivan Padalka, Lelia Krychevska, Hanna Lysetska, Mykhailo Boichuk, Musia Trubetska, Tymko Boichuk, Prosia Nychenko, Serhii Kolos. The CSAMLA of Ukraine. Fond 355. Opys 2. Sprava 56

Kateryna Antonovych writes:

> "I stayed behind with his [Dmytro Antonovych's] sister Halia, and almost immediately we decided that something had to be done if the statute of the Academy was to be approved! [...] Almost all ministers were our good acquaintances who frequently visited either our home or that of Halia. We decided to talk to them and explain why it was so important to approve the statute. [...] We went to the Rada meeting and talked with the ministers during a break. Each of them realized that this measure had to be passed immediately."[21]

21 Antonovych, Kateryna. *Z moikh spomyniv* [From My Memoirs] (in five volumes). Vol. 5. – Winnipeg: The Ukrainian Free Academy of Sciences. – P. 189. [In Ukrainian]

Kateryna Antonovych is known as a public figure dealing with education issues and a member of the Revolutionary Ukrainian Party, but she was primarily an artist. She attended Kateryna Drashkovska's gymnasium in Kharkiv, which admitted only noble children, graduated from the city school of drawing and painting in the same place, studied at the Academy of Arts in Kyiv, and attended Vasyl Krychevsky's and Mykhailo Boichuk's studios.[22] Antonovych emigrated with her family in 1923, first to Czechoslovak Republic, and later to Canada, where she established a school of drawing and painting in Winnipeg (1952). Having browsed through the list of the academy's students from 1918–1922, we find other women's names as well.[23] For example, the studio of Fedir Krychevsky was attended by twenty-three students, among them at least three women.[24] Thirty-four students were enrolled in the studio of Vasyl Krychevsky, among them at least twelve women.[25] Twenty-six students studied at the studio of Mykhailo Boichuk, among which at least nine women artists.[26] Exactly half of Heorhii Narbut's students were women: Aryna Aha, Iryna Adamska, Marta Burk, and Olena Sakhnovska. Together with other students of Narbut, young women artists contributed to the *Eleas* magazine.

Unfortunately, it is not known whether there were any established admission rules, which documents prospective students were required to submit, or whether the preparation of a portfolio was compulsory. Valentyna Ruban states in the text *The Never-Painted Frescoes of Mariia Yunak* that when joining Boichuk-led monumental art department, the young woman artist presented her home-made drawings.[27] This enabled her to be admitted for a month-long trial term and then for the whole period of study until 1927.[28] Yunak defended her diploma in 1929 and went on to teach at the academy after graduation. However, she was able to do so only between September 1933 and the fall of 1934 when she was forced to leave the educational institution because of persecution and pressure being exerted on the "Boichukists". Having no opportunity to work on monumental projects in the subsequent years, Yunak worked as a painter (in the genres of portrait, landscape, and still life), created graphics (for posters and books, which were published by *Mystetsvo* and *Molodyi Bilshovyk* publishing houses), and also worked as film illustrator at the Kyiv Studio of Popular Science Films. The time for Yunak's true artistic activity came later, in the late 1960s, when a new interest in monumental art emerged.

Another student at the academy, Oksana Pavlenko, wrote in an autobiography she compiled for the Union of Soviet Artists that she passed competitive selection for the studio of Vasyl Krychevsky, however, disillusioned with her studies, she then moved to Boichuk's monumental art studio.[29]

22 Antonovych, Kateryna. *Z moikh spomyniv* [From My Memoirs] (in five volumes). Vol. 1. – Winnipeg: The Ukrainian Free Academy of Sciences. – P. 21-29. [In Ukrainian]

23 *Ukrainska akademiia mystetstv: Istoriia zasnuvannia ta fundatory* [The Ukrainian Academy of Arts: A History of Founding and Founders].– Kyiv: Rodovid, 2015. – P. 248-249. [In Ukrainian]

24 Iryna Beklemisheva, Olha Hurska, and Maryna Shternberg.

25 Kateryna Antonovych, Kateryna Borodina, Yevhenia Dmitrieva, Taisia Horbenko, Mariia Kholodna, Olena Kiva, Nina Kotek, Oksana Pavlenko, Olena Rzhechytska, Mariia Trubetska, and Mariia Yunak.

26 Kateryna Antonovych, Kateryna Borodina, Taisia Horbenko, Antonina Ivanova, Oksana Pavlenko, Olena Rzhechytska, Olena Sakhnovska, Mariia Trubetska, and Mariia Yunak. In addition, Sofia Sehno was among the students of Boichuk as well.

27 Ruban, Valentyna. "Nenapisannyie freski Marii Yunak" [The Never-Painted Frescoes of Mariia Yunak] // *Zabytye imena* [Forgotten Names]. – Kyiv: Naukova Dumka, 1990. – P. 254. [In Russian]

28 However, during her studies, Yunak took part in collective exhibitions and arranged the Ukrainian pavilion at the first agricultural exhibition of the USSR in 1923. She taught at the academy after graduation; however, the artist was able to do so only between September 1933 and the fall of 1934. She was forced to leave the educational institution because of persecution.
See: Ruban, Valentyna. "Nenapisannyie freski Marii Yunak" [The Never-Painted Frescoes of Mariia Yunak] // Zabytye imena [Forgotten Names]. – Kyiv: Naukova Dumka, 1990. – P. 254. [In Russian]

29 Pavlenko, Oksana. "Avtobiografiya" [Autobiography] [Typed manuscript] / TsDAMLM [The Central State Archives and Museum of Literature and Arts] of Ukraine. Fond 356. Opys 1. Sprava 118. – P. 1. [In Russian]

Oksana Pavlenko. Long Live March 8! 1930–1931. Tempera on canvas. Photo courtesy of the National Art Museum of Ukraine

"Boichuk very reluctantly accepted girls to the studio and resolutely refused to accept me at first. His motivation was that girls were inherently unreliable. He would spend time and effort on them, and then they would marry and abandon art... But I was patient and sought his consent for a long time, so he eventually accepted me."[30]

30 Pavlenko, Oksana. "Zapiski o masterskoy monumentalnoy zhivopisi Kievskoy Ukrainskoy Akademii Khudozhestv, rukovodimoy profes[sorom] Boychukom M.L."[Notes on the Monumental Painting Studio of Kiev Ukrainian Academy of Arts, Headed by Prof[essor] Mykhailo

Pavlenko came from a poor peasant family, was interested in mathematics from childhood, but, as she writes in her autobiography, she was destined to become an artist. The artist states in her genealogy how difficult it was to study for a girl from a definitely not wealthy family because her parents believed she needed to marry, not to obtain an education. Pavlenko's mother even grumbled:

> "My baby, it's not for people like us, it's only for the rich, and you'll die somewhere, unable to earn your daily bread..."[31]

According to Pavlenko, nobody ever spoke about art in her family, and she received her education through hard work and diligence. Many artists, both men and women, perceived their studies at the academy, which coincided in time with the revolutionary epoch, with rapt enthusiasm, inspired by the new spirit of the times. But everything changed very quickly, and "ignorance and counterrevolution acted together. Misunderstanding and slander joined forces to destroy the valuable endeavor."[32]

The second half of the 1930s was the time of active ideological struggle in the academy. It was at this time that a young student Tetiana Yablonska entered the painting department to study at the studio of Fedir Krychevsky. She studied at the academy during the pre-war Stalinist period, in 1935–1941. Radical political decisions were being implemented in Ukraine: a political trial of the Borotbists took place on May 27–28, 1935, and the persecution and torture of artists reached its height in 1937, which became known in history as "the Executed Renaissance."[33] In fact, Yablonska's life can be seen as a metaphor for the entire subsequent history of Ukrainian art. With her biography, she linked different generations — the beginning of the century in the person of her teacher Fedir Krychevsky and the end of the millennium in the person of her student Tiberii Silvashi, who is a founding member of the art association Painting Sanctuary. The active creative years of Yablonska itself spanned different epochs: from the post-war reconstruction to the period of perestroika and the first years of Ukrainian independence. Artist Tiberii Silvashi recalled: "I do not remember when I first heard this name. Perhaps, first I saw reproductions of her works in my textbooks, and I learned her surname and first name later. But surely, there were books and albums on the shelves of libraries. They stood next to Leonardo's and Rembrandt's albums, and they were equally interesting for a boy who decided to become an artist and read all books about artists he came upon. It seemed like a historical figure from books."[34] Silvashi's study years at the end of the 1960s and early 1970s came when Yablonska taught at the Art Institute and revived the studio of monumental art. "There were occasions when the Council refused to go upstairs to us and evaluate our works. Still, the authority of Yablonska won in the end, and the Council came to our rooms on the third floor. They intended to mark our works with C's, but Yablonska made them upgrade it to B," the artist recalled.

Over the first fifty years of the 20th century, only two artists represented the art of the Ukrainian SSR at the Venice Biennale: Aleksandra Ekster's Venice was exhibited in 1924, and Yablonska's painting *Bread* went on display in the year 1956.

Boichuk] // TsDAMLM [The Central State Archives and Museum of Literature and Arts] of Ukraine. Fond 356. Opys 1. Sprava 120. – P. 15. [In Russian]

31 Pavlenko, Oksana. "Rodoslovnaya" [Genealogy] [Typed manuscript] / TsDAMLM [The Central State Archives and Museum of Literature and Arts] of Ukraine. Fond 356. Opys 1. Sprava 118. – P. 15. [In Russian]

32 Pavlenko, Oksana. "Boychuk M.L. i 'boychukizm'" [Mykhailo Boichuk and "Boichukism"] [Memoirs] / TsDAMLM [The Central State Archives and Museum of Literature and Arts] of Ukraine. Fond 356. Opys 1. Sprava 119. Zoshyt 1. – P. 16. [In Russian]

33 See: Shapoval, Yuri "'Kontrrevoliuciinoi borotbystskoi orhanizacii' sprava 1935" [The Case of the "Counter-Revolutionary Borotbist Organization," 1935 // *Entsyklopedia istorii Ukrainy* [Encyclopedia of the History of Ukraine]: 10 Vols. (Ed. by Valerii Smolii et al.; Institute of History of Ukraine of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine). – Kyiv: Naukova Dumka, 2007. – Vol. 4: Ka-Kom. [In Ukrainian]

34 Silvashi, Tiberii. "Stranno bylo uznat', chto ona sovremennik..." [It Was Strange to Find Out That She Was a Contemporary... [An expanded version of the lecture read at the National Art Museum] // *Prostory*. – May 22, 2017 – [Electronic Source]. – Retrieved from: http://prostory.net.ua/ua/praktyka/193-stranno-bylo-uznat-chto-ona-sovremennik [In Russian]

Vasyl Sedliar. A Portrait of Oksana Pavlenko. 1926–1927. Tempera on canvas. Photo courtesy of the National Art Museum of Ukraine

Ada Rybachuk at work on the Memory Wall.
Photo courtesy of Volodymyr Melnychenko

THE ROLE OF THE ARTIST AND THE SOVIET "VERSION" OF CYBERFEMINISM

Monumental art was undergoing a revival in Ukraine since the end of the 1950s. Meanwhile, Soviet society was plunging into an ever deeper socio-economic, political, and ideological crisis since the mid-1960s. At that time, monumental art became a kind of bolt-hole and a place of freedom, where the artists implemented their creative ideas[35]. Galyna Sklyarenko observes that painters, graphic artists, and sculptors entered the mural art because they perceived this art form as "innovative, capable of opening paths to a renewal of artistic thinking, the democratization of the artwork's social functioning, and active and direct creative self-realization."[36]
The development of monumental art coincided with the development of science, in particular, cybernetics and space exploration. The surgeon Nikolai Amosov, a friend of Ada Rybachuk, writes in his autobiography that "our 'cybernetics' began in 1958 when a group of enthusiasts gathered."[37]

35 Sklyarenko, Galyna. "Materialy do istorii: Monumentalno-dekoratyvne mystetstvo Ukrainy druhoi polovyny XX stolittia" [Materials for the History of the Monumental and Decorative Art in Ukraine in the Second Half of the 20th Century] // Retrieved from: https:// sovietmosaicsinukraine.org/media/uploads/text/Stynopis_G._Sklyarenko_MDArt_ Stinopis_Galina_Sklyarenko_MDArt.pdf [In Ukrainian]
36 Ibid.
37 Ibid. – P. 49.

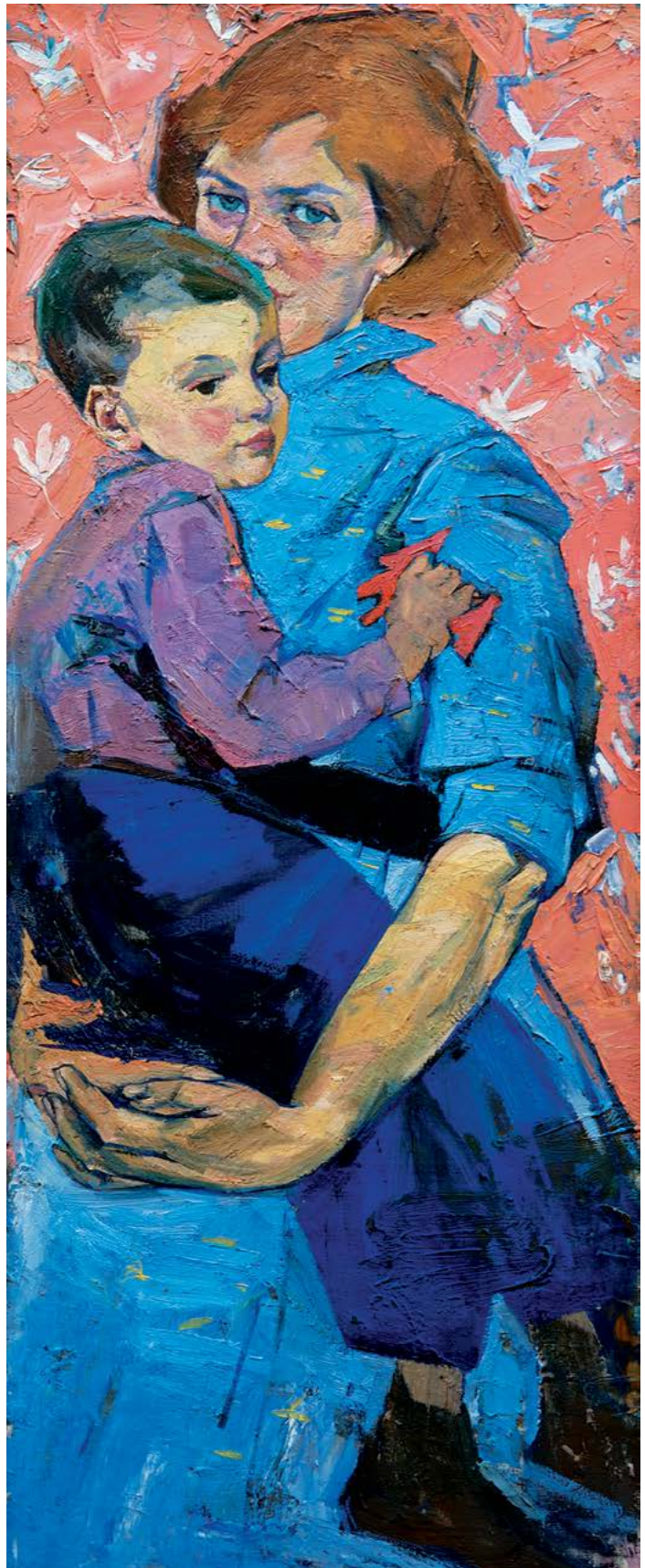
The creation of artificial intelligence and the growing relevance of global issues regarding the future of man and society was also visualized by Feliks Sobolev and Andrei Tarkovsky in their film productions.

The development of the ideas of space and artificial intelligence took place in parallel with remembering the past. Ukrainian intellectuals began to deal with traumatic moments of history. For example, on October 10, 1959, the Kyiv-based writer Viktor Nekrasov published an article in *Literaturnaya Gazeta,* entitled *Why Has This Not Been Done? (On the Monument to the Dead of Babi Yar in Kyiv)*. He expressed his protest against plans to build a park and a stadium there, "to fill the ravine with a thirty-meter-thick layer of earth and play games, including soccer, on the site of a great tragedy." In September 1966, the writer spoke at a spontaneous rally in Babi Yar, whose participants were accused of nationalism and Zionism, and subsequently were repressed. In the same year, a contest was announced for the design of a monument to the victims of fascism, to be built in Babi Yar. The project of artists Ada Rybachuk and Volodymyr Melnychenko was among more than thirty projects submitted.[38] The theme of historical memory and oblivion became central to the artists and was manifested in their lagest project — the Memory Wall at the Baikove Cemetery, which took about twenty years to complete. The authorities attempted to terminate the project on three occasions, and finally buried the artwork and covered it with concrete in 1982. Only one fragment of the work was discovered by the public thirty-six years later.[39] In her diaries, Ada Rybachuk repeatedly wrote about the course of that effort and opposition that they faced throughout the time.

Descriptions of the generation of artists that came to the forefront in the sixties often begin with the word "unbowed," focusing on the artists' virtues, and not on art itself.[40] Artists at that time were seen as indefatigable, endowed with superhuman heroic traits, like inner strength, courage, zeal, and fearlessness. It seemed that only such a person could resist the system and defend the basic principles — the right to education, the right to be a believer, freedom of speech, and other civil rights and freedoms. In the end, it was precisely these disobedient people who could resist the system and the repressive policies of the state. Under these conditions, a human being became truly Human, and an artist — an Artist with a capital "A".

> "Creativity requires courage, both as material and a condition for creativity. The human and art pay a high price to become omnipotent and eternal," Ada Rybachuk, called then "the hope of Ukrainian art," said in 1959.[41] In 2010, Rybachuk was awarded the Nadia Surovtsova Memorial Medal *For Unbowedness of the Spirit and Word*.

38 Nekrasov, Viktor. "Novye pamyatniki" [New Monuments] // *Dekorativnoye iskusstvo SSSR* [Decorative Art of the USSR]. – 1966. – No. 12. – P. 23-27. [In Russian]
39 "V Kieve prezentovali vosstanovlennyi fragment 'Steny Pamyati' na Baykovoy gore" [A Restored Fragment of the Memory Wall Was Presented on Baikova Hill] // *UKRINFORM*. – May 19, 2015 – [Electronic Source]. – Retrieved from: https://www.ukrinform.ru/rubric-kyiv/2463635-v-kieve-prezentova li-vosstanovlennyj-fragment-steny-pama ti-na-bajkovoj-gore.html [In Russian]
40 For example: *Pleiada neskorenykh: Alla Horska, Opanas Zalyvakha, Viktor Zaretsky, Halyna Sevruk, Liudmyla Semykina* [A Pleiade of the Unbowed: Alla Horska, Opanas Zalyvakha, Viktor Zaretsky, Halyna Sevruk, Liudmyla Semykina] [Electronic copy]: [Biobibliographic essay]. Prepared by the National Parliamentary Library of Ukraine [Essay by L.B. Tarnashynska; compiled by M.A. Lukianenko; edited by V.O. Kononenko]. – Kyiv: The National Parliamentary Library of Ukraine, 2011 (Kyiv: The Yaroslav the Wise National Library of Ukraine, 2016). – (Sixties: Profiles against the Background of a Generation, No. 13). [In Ukrainian]
41 Rybachuk, Ada. *Zapakhy zemli* [The Smells of the Earth] / Ada Rybachuk, Volodymyr Melnychenko // Kyiv: ADEF-Ukraine, 2013. – P. 8. [In Ukrainian]
Quoted after: Ibid. – P. 48.



Alla Horska. A Self-Portrait with Son. 1960.
Oil on canvas. Photo courtesy
of the National Art Museum of Ukraine

In some regards, the idea of an Artist capable of working beyond national boundaries, state borders, and ideologies for the art's greater glory is close to those ideas that were described in the 1980s and 1990s as cyber-feminism. These ideas erode the concepts of sex and gender and act in the plane of post-humanism. The events of the late 1950s–1970s in the USSR can be considered from these positions as well, because it was Human, regardless of sex and gender, their humanistic values and ideals that were then of particular importance to male and female artists.

It is about civil feats and heroics that we usually speak when recalling the creative work of the artist Alla Horska. Together with other creators of that time — Halyna Zubchenko, Halyna Sevruk, Liudmyla Semykina, Ada Rybachuk, and others — she created a new canon of monumental art.

In spite of political relaxation that marked the Khrushchev's Thaw period, it was precisely the 1960s that saw a new drive for the governmental control over all art forms, as well as a new wave of repressions. In 1968, 139 artists, scholars and poets wrote a collective letter addressed to Leonid Brezhnev, Aleksei Kosygin, and Nikolai Podgorny, protesting political repression, trials held behind closed doors, and persecution of the Ukrainian intelligentsia. The signatories included Horska, Sevruk, Semykina, and Yablonska. "Horska, Semykina, and I were punished for the letter with expulsion from the Union of Artists as if we were criminals. All other artists who signed the letter (there were twelve of them) repented and avoided punishment. It was only three women — stubborn, arrogant, and defenseless — who were punished. For twenty years, the Union kept its doors closed to us. No exhibitions were allowed. Only in 1989, on the eve of the Independence, the doors opened and we had our membership in the Union of Artists restored," Sevruk recalled.[42] The artist wrote that when many of her colleagues were arrested and sent to exile, she found her salvation from depression in working. "I was not removed from my job, but inspections were frequent," Sevruk recalled.[43]

After signing the letter of support, the creator was held under the close surveillance of the KGB, and, in the early 1970s, she was banned from working on the subject of the Cossacks. The Sevruks' collective family biography is one of the richest, touching upon various layers of culture: her great-grandfather Ivan Hryhorovych-Barsky was an architect who built two churches in Kyiv's Podil neighborhood — the church of St. Nicholas Naberezhny and that of the Virgin's Intercession, as well as shrines in Lemeshi and Kozelets.[44] Her grandfather, Dmytro Hryhorovych-Barsky, was a defense lawyer in the Beilis case.[45]

Halyna Sevruk entered the Kyiv Art Institute in the early 1950s on the third attempt, because "they then admitted war veterans (even if scoring as low as 17 points) and other lads were passing, because Sharonov, director of the Institute, did not see any prospects in girls."[46] Sevruk writes that the situation changed when Serhii Hryhoriev, who had two twin daughters, took over the directorship. In the same year, one of his daughters

42 Sevruk, Halyna. "Spohady" [Memoirs] [80-page manuscript, last edited January 15, 2016] // *The Free Museum of the Dissident Movement in Ukraine* [Electronic Source]. – Retrieved from: http://museum.khpg.org/index.php?id=1454935332 [In Ukrainian]

43 Mysiuha, Bohdan. "Vikova tradytsia v mystetsvi Halyny Sevruk" [A Centuries-Old Tradition in Halyna Sevruk's Art] // *Ukraina. Nauka i kultura* [Ukraine. Science and Culture]. – 2008. – No. 34. – P. 428-434.

44 "V gostyakh u khudozhnika: intervyu s legendarnoy ukrainskoy shestidesyatnitsey Halinoy Sevruk" [A Visit to an Artist: An Interview with Halyna Sevruk, a Legendary Ukrainian Sixtier // *Artkhiv* [Electronic Source]. – Retrieved from: https://artchive.ru/publications/1992~V_gostjakh_u_khudozhnika_intervju_s_legendarnoj_ukrainskoj_shestidesjatnitsej_Galinoj_Sevruk [In Russian]

45 Sevruk, Halyna. "Spohady" [Memoirs] [80-page manuscript, last edited January 15, 2016] // *The Free Museum of the Dissident Movement in Ukraine* [Electronic Source]. – Retrieved from: http://museum.khpg.org/index.php?id=1454935332 [In Ukrainian]

46 Ibid.

Iryna Pap at the Gallery of the Old Masters. Dresden, GDR, 1978. Photo by Boris Gradov. Photo courtesy of Iryna Pap's family

entered the painting department, and another was admitted to the department of graphics. Sevruk was also admitted in that group: "And they did well because otherwise I would have married and lost all chances to enter the Institute," she adds.[47] Zoya Sokol, a member of Odesa Grekov State Art School's class of 1978, recalls a similar situation with the admission rules. According to her testimony, the Odesa school also gave priority in its admissions to former career soldiers, men who had done their compulsory military service, and rural-origin students in the early 1970s.[48]

IN THE TWILIGHT OF OTHERS' BIOGRAPHIES

Often women's biographies are "read" between the lines of male artists' *vitae*. For example, we find information on the drawer Yelyzaveta Piskorska, a student of Fedir Krychevsky and Mykhailo Boichuk, in the text about her brother, Kostiantyn Piskorsky. "And since you are truly talented, do not worry, make as many drawings as possible, and most importantly, do it with love, and you may well achieve a lot," he said to his sister.[49] Overshadowed by the biography of the writer Ivan Svitlychny, we see a mention of his sister Mariia Svitlychna,

47 Ibid.

48 A personal communication to Kateryna Iakovlenko.

49 Ruban, Valentina. "Skolko do Siriusa? Khudozhnik Konstantin Piskorsky" [How Far Away is Sirius? Artist Kostiantyn Piskorsky] // *Zabytye imena* [Forgotten Names]. – Kyiv: Naukova Dumka, 1990. – P. 167. [In Russian]

who, together with a group of artists, took part in the creation of monumental decorative panels in Donetsk and Mariupol.[50] However, there are no extant memoirs dealing with her role as a painter. She is largely recorded in the history of Ukrainian culture as a writer and a participant of the dissident movement, because she taught the Ukrainian language, translated and edited texts. In addition, Svitlychna was a member of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group, whose participants were arrested and sentenced for four years for anti-Soviet propaganda and agitation in 1972. Since 1978, she lived in the USA. Svitlychna was deprived of her Soviet citizenship in 1985.

In the introductory article to the book *The Art of the Ukrainian Sixtiers*, Olga Balashova and Lizaveta German note that this period in art was marked by creative pairs, which were ultimately dominated by painters' husbands: Alla Horska and Viktor Zaretsky, Margit Selska and Roman Selsky, Yelyzaveta Kremnytska and Pavlo Bedzyr.[51] However, such creative tandems were quite common in the following decades as well, and we can list the family of two photographers, Iryna Pap and Boris Gradov, as another example.
Pap was the only photojournalist in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic to be the equal of her photographer husband, who took pictures of her for Moscow publications.
In the early 1990s, the woman photographer's archive was located by her colleague Valerii Miloserdov, who began to popularize Pap's archive in exhibitions and publications.
After years of work on her legacy, it turned out that Pap left two archives, one official and another unofficial, which she collected for herself. The latter archive held photos taken in her overseas trips and during meetings with leading officials of the Ukrainian SSR.
When commenting on these photos, Miloserdov reflects on them as follows:

> "I think that this time had a great influence on the next generations. The war ended. The cult of Joseph Stalin was debunked. There was some rebound going on. Political prisoners were being freed from the camps. There was a sense that freedom was coming. Then the oppression began again. [...] Iryna Pap sensed the era. She very accurately conveyed it. In my opinion, her photos offer a crystallization of reality. It was as if she scanned it. I understand and feel it. And it should be said that she did not like her time. This is evident if you look at her home photos — she looks completely different on them."[52]

50 The word "overshadowed" is used here intentionally. The artist Halyna Sevruk recalls her first visit to the Creative Youth Club: "The very first evening, Ivan Svitlychny made the greatest impression on me: he seemed to emanate light, and no one else was like this!"
See more informatiohn in: Sevruk, Halyna. "Spohady" [Memoirs] [80-page manuscript, last edited January 15, 2016] // *The Free Museum of the Dissident Movement in Ukraine* [Electronic Source]. – Retrieved from: http://museum.khpg.org/index.php?id=1454935332
[In Ukrainian] Nezhyva, L. and Nezhyvy, O. *Tvorchist Ivana ta Nadii Svitlychnykh u shkoli: Navchalny posibnyk z ukrayinskoi literatury uzahalnoosvitnikh navchalnykh zakladakh* [Studying Works by Ivan and Nadia Svitlychny at School: A Textbook on Ukrainian Literature for Comprehensive Schools].– Luhansk: SPD Reznikov V.S., 2008 [In Ukrainian]
Ohnieva, Liudmyla. *Perlyny ukrayinskoho monumentalnoho mystetstva na Donechchyni* [Treasures of Ukrainian Monumental Art in Donetsk Region].– Ivano-Frankivsk: Lilia NV, 2008. [In Ukrainian]

51 Balashova, Olga and German, Lizaveta. "Po sledam ukrainskih shestidesyatnikov' [In the Footsteps of the Ukrainian Sixtiers] // *Iskusstvo ukrainskih shestidesjatnikov* [The Art of the Ukrainian Sixtiers]. - Kyiv: Osnovy, 2015. – P. 13 [In Russian]

52 A personal communication to Kateryna Iakovlenko.

Marharyta Zharkova with the tapestry Bird. Odesa, 1990. Photo by Viktor Ratushny. Photo courtesy of Yulia Zharkova

Marharyta Zharkova with Yulia Zharkova. Odesa, 1983–1984. Photo by Valentyn Sierov. Photo courtesy of Yulia Zharkova

When recalling what she termed *A Cultural Enclave: Informal Artistic Life of Uzhhorod in the Sixties*, Halyna Ryzhova wrote about Kremnytska and Bedzyr: "Pavlo [Bedzyr] teased her all the time, saying that women are not as intelligent as men, their brains are not inclined to philosophizing. Because of that, Lisa [Kremnytska] read everything he read, and then, probably, some more. And when he began to speak, she interrupted him, either enhancing his thesis or arguing with him. However, in painting, she was by head and shoulders above him. It was beyond doubt. He understood this, and probably teased her all the time because of it."[53]

One perspective used to describe the art of the 1970s and 1980s in Lviv is that of the circle of Oleksandr Aksinin, whose members included Enhelina Buryakovskaya (1944–1982), Halyna Zhehulska (born 1957) and Henrietta Levytska (1930–2010).[54] Recently, women artists of the Heorhii Yakutovych's circle began to be discussed within the framework of the Yakutovych Academy project, which emphasizes the talents of the artists Oleksandra Pavlovska and Olha Yakutovych, who were drawers as well.[55]

Describing the artistic environment of Odesa in the 1960s, Oleksii Tytarenko wrote in his article *Precious and Lonely Sounds of the Sixties:* "Artists quickly became surrounded by journalists, collectors, friends, and beautiful girls. It will suffice to mention Rita Anufriieva!"[56] However, the context of Odesa at that time can be viewed not only from the male perspective, that of Valentyn Khrushch, Aleksandr Anufriiev and Viktor Maryniuk, but also from the perspective of sisterhood and women's mutual support. This perspective is applicable to two figures: Liudmyla Yastreb and Marharyta Zharkova. It is believed by some that it was because of Yastreb's work *Non* that this period in the development of art was christened "nonconformism."[57] "It was a case of genuinely deep friendship and mutual understanding. It even involved Yastreb's husband Viktor Maryniuk becoming the godfather of my brother Sergei Anufriiev. And my mother was the matron of honor at the wedding of Yastreb and Maryniuk. When Yastreb died of cancer, she was 36. Her son Andrii was 16. And my mother took him to our home and raised him almost like a son. He lived with us for a couple of years as another member of the family," Yuliia Zharkova recalled.

Marharyta Zharkova is mentioned mostly as Odesa's Yoko Ono, her biography remains overshadowed by the two artists who were close to her: her second husband Aleksandr Anufriiev and her son Sergei Anufriiev. Meanwhile, Zharkova saw art as both a source of happiness and a way to escape from mundane troubles and problems.

> "All her works are ethereal, light-filled, and brightly colored. They are exquisite and feature pure colors. I remember her buying a lot of Dutch gouache paints, a huge set of paint cans one day, secluding herself in her room and working all night long," Yuliia Zharkova commented.

53 Ryzhova, Halyna. "Kulturny anklav: neofitsialnaya khudozhestvennaya zhizn Uzhgoroda 60-kh" [A Cultural Enclave: Informal Artistic Life of Uzhhorod in the Sixties] // *Shestidesyatniki. Iskusstvo ukrainskih shestidesjatnikov* [The Sixtiers. Art of the Ukrainian Sixtiers]. – Kyiv: Osnovy, 2015. – P. 77 [In Russian]

54 The exhibition *Aksinin and His Circle was held in the EDUCATORIUM* space from December 13, 2016 to January 20, 2017.

55 See: *Yakutovychi: dovilnyi konspekt. Zhyttia i tvorchist rodyny Yakutovychiv. Kolo. Aktualni vydannia i proekty* [The Yakutovychs: An Arbitrary Abstract. Life and Oeuvre of the Yakutovych Family. Their Circle. Relevant Publications and Projects]. – Kyiv: Artbuk, 2018 [In Ukrainian]

56 Tytarenko, Oleksii. "Odinokie dragotsennyie zvuki shestidesjatykh" [Precious and Lonely Sounds of the Sixties] // *Shestidesyatniki. Iskusstvo ukrainskih shestidesjatnikov* [The Sixtiers. Art of the Ukrainian Sixtiers]. – Kyiv: Osnovy, 2015. – P. 19 [In Russian]

57 Iakovlenko, Kateryna. "Yuliia Zharkova: Mama vzrashhivala v nas sposobnost' svobodno myslit'" [Yuliia Zharkova: Mother Nurtured Our Ability to Think Freely] // *KORYDOR* [Electronic source]. – November 14, 2018. – Retrieved from: http://www.korydor.in.ua/ua/voices/Julia-zharkova-mama-vzrashhivala-v-nas-sposobnost-svobodno-myslit.html [In Russian]

Zharkova effectively raised the next generation of artists, introducing them to informal Soviet art and Western practices and giving them art magazines and forbidden literature. It was through getting to know her and Sergei Anufriiev that the views and practices of Larysa Rezun-Zvezdochetova changed thoroughly. The artist transferred her own interest in domestic culture and applied arts into the field of contemporary art. For example, her series of pictures imitating embroidery was exhibited, along with works by other Soviet artists, at the *Aperto 90* exhibition, which was held within the framework of the 44th Venice Biennale, with Vladimir Goryainov as the Soviet commissioner.

Describing the context of the 1990s in a conversation, the artist Oleg Tistol compared this time to a "men's communal bath," where women, rather than being unwelcome, were unwilling to enter themselves.[58] His wife, artist Maryna Skugarieva, entered the field in 1987 with the tapestry *Portrait of Artist Anatol Stepanenko*, created after Tistol's outline. Skugarieva is better known for her intimate graphic series and picturesque paintings, where she adds embroidery elements as if they were heraldic signs. Her drawings of the series Good Housewives fit into a feminist context. However, the artist's entire oeuvre is rather low-key and intimate and does not fit into the public and scandalous relationships of the 1990s.

When discussing the art of women Larysa Rezun-Zvezdochetova, Svetlana Kopystianska, and Halyna Zhehulska in the catalog *Soviet Art about 1990*, Jürgen Harten writes: "The works of these women artists are characterized by a general rejection of dominant trends in art, a turn toward ornamentation, and a distinct color scheme as well as the desire for clarity."[59]

Quality education and access to knowledge were what both male and female artists strived for in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Official Soviet education did not satisfy their demands, and they eagerly consumed whatever they got their hands on — *samizdat*, banned literature, and foreign texts. It is not surprising, then, that the subject of education and knowledge becomes central to many Ukrainian artists. In particular, they are in the focus of Svetlana Kopystianska's works *Library* (1990) and *Story* (1990), for which books were the main material. "My artistic ideas are directly related to literature. [...] The public status of the writer was traditionally higher than that of the artist. The book was considered a sacred object, and the writer was seen as a prophet and living conscience of the society, while the status of the artist was equated with that of the mere artisan."[60] Contemporary art is just as inclined to reflect on the subject of academic artistic education. In particular, the artist Lada Nakonechna offers important reflections on this topic.

Between the mid-1980s and the mid-1990s, active workers in the field of art included Yana Bystrova, Tetiana Hershuni (Taia Galagan), Halyna Zhehulska, Svetlana Kopystianska (in collaboration with Ihor Kopystiansky), Olena Kudinova, Svitlana Kondratenko, Svitlana Martynchyk (as a member of the Martynchyky artistic duo), Vlada Ralko, Olena Nekrasova, Viktoria Parkhomenko, Liudmila Skrypkina (a member of the Pertsi artistic duo), Zoya Sokol, and Valeria Troubina. Some artists then left Ukraine, others stopped creating art and moved to other fields. Most of these artists are predominantly mentioned in the family and everyday life contexts: Olena Kudinova is better known as "Sednev's mother," Larysa Rezun-Zvezdochetova cooked borshch in Furmanny Lane, and Valeria Troubina did the same in Parkomuna.[61] In their creative efforts, the artists faced

58 Oleg Tistol's personal communication to Tatiana Kochubinska and Tetiana Zhmurko.

59 Harten, Jürgen. "Vosem pechatey v pasporte ili 'Tam chudesa, tam leshiy brodit...'" [Eight Stamps in the Passport or "What Wonders There! There Goblins Scurry..."] // *Sovetskoye iskusstvo okolo 1990 goda* [Soviet Art about 1990]. – P. 13. [In Russian]

60 Kopystianska, Svetlana. [Untitled] // *Sovetskoye iskusstvo okolo 1990 goda* [Soviet Art about 1990]. – P. 234. [In Russian]

61 Silvashi, Tiberii. "Sposob preodoleniya gravitatsii" [A Way to Overcome Gravity] // *Yelena Kudinova. Istochik tsveta* [Olena Kudinova.

Maryna Hlushchenko and Olena Kudinova. Photo by Volodymyr Bysov. Photo courtesy of the family of Olena Kudinova

Yana Bystrova with her classmates. Kyiv Art Institute, the second half of the 1980s. Photo by an unknown artist. Photo courtesy of Yana Bystrova

Liudmyla Yastreb at an exhibition. Odesa. Photo by an unknown author. Photo courtesy of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Odesa

Svitlana Martynchyk during Leonid Voitsekhov's performance Exploring Artistic Deposits. Odesa, 1987. Photo by an unknown author. Photo courtesy of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Odesa

challenging everyday circumstances, economic difficulties, and personal problems. In this context, I would like to recall the following story: Iryna Lastovkina's first artwork/art object — the iron dress of *Madame Butterfly* — became her last work ever in the field of contemporary art.

> "My path to art was blocked by the lack of funds. I was in my sixth year at the institute then, and they immediately offered me a teaching position. This mostly determined my subsequent fate, as I began to teach. [...] Then I was also hired by the History Museum of Ukraine. All in all, I worked at the academy and the museum for twenty years. [...] In addition, I tried to provide Yuri Solomko with more opportunities. At that time he was a non-commercial artist. It was only five years ago that they began to buy contemporary art, and there was nothing of the kind then," Lastovkina recalled.[62]

It was in the 1990s that an interest in feminism appeared, through literary circles and an emerging understanding of women's practices and modernist processes in Ukraine. At the beginning of the 1990s, first attempts at feminist exhibitions in Kyiv came in. In 1994, an exhibition of feminist photography was held by the American artist Diane Neumaier at the Kosyi Kaponir.[63] In 1995, the Kyiv-based curator Natalia Filonenko organized "The Mouth of Medusa" exhibition at the Brama Gallery.[64] Both exhibitions took place with the support of the Center for Contemporary Art in Kyiv, in particular, its director Marta Kuzma.

However, the vast majority of "feminist" artworks of the early 1990s were predominantly situational and intuitive. "Feminism remains a subversive concept in this country, and therefore, given the conservatism of Ukrainian society, it is often dismissed and despised," this is how the researcher of feminist art and curator Oksana Briukhovetska characterizes the contemporary Ukrainian artistic field in the article "The Victim Image and Emancipation. An Essay on the Ukrainian Art Scene and Feminism".[65] The author notes that, as a rule, the issue of "female weakness" was left undiscussed and lost among the stereotypes regarding the "place" and "role" of the woman.[66] In her texts and studies, she asks, why feminism still scares many female authors today.

The Source of Color]. – Kharkiv, 2018. – P.7. [In Russian]

See: Solomon, Andrew. *The Irony Tower. Sovetskiye khudozhniki vo vremena glasnosti* [The Irony Tower. Soviet Artists during the Time of Glasnost]. – Moscow: Ad Marginem Press, 2013. [In Russian]

See: *Parkomuna. Mistse. Spilnota. Yavyshche* [Parkomuna. Place. Community. Phenomenon]. – Kyiv: Publish Pro, 2018. [In Ukrainian]

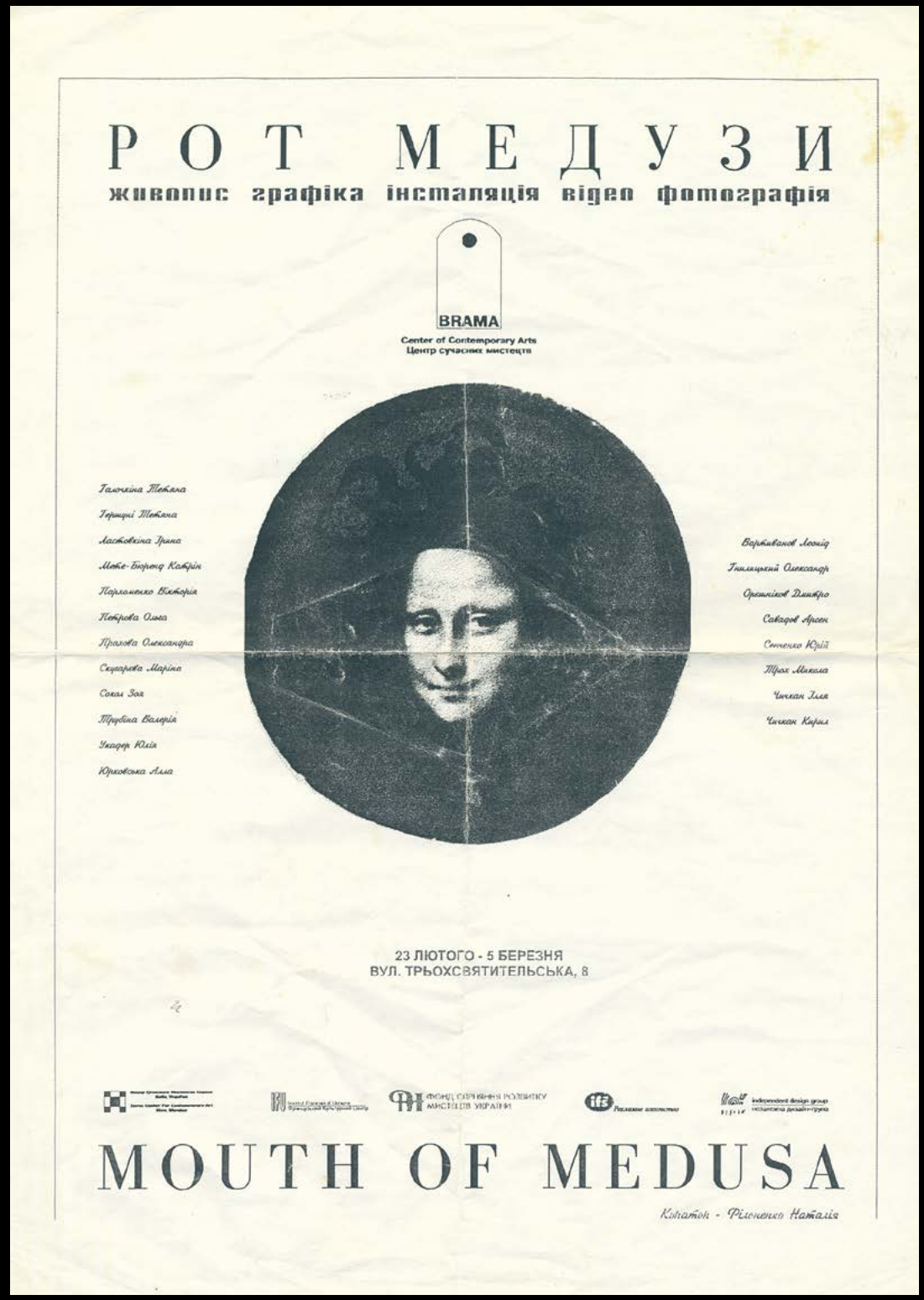
62 Iakovlenko, Kateryna. "Irina Lastovkina: Kogda my uvideli ukrainskuyu zhivopis, u nas vsyo perevernulos s nog na golovu" [Iryna Lastovkina: When We Saw Ukrainian Painting, Everything Turned Upside Down Inside Us] // *KORYDOR* [Electronic source]. – December 14, 2018.– Retrieved from: http://www.korydor.in.ua/ua/woman-in-culture/irina-lastovkina-kogda-my-uvideli-ukrainskuju-zhivopis-u-nas-vse-perevernulos-s-nog-na-golovu.html [In Russian]

63 See: Sydor-Hibelynda, Oleg. "Hrudy Metropolitena" [The Breasts of the Subway] // *Terra Incognita*. – No. 3/4. – P. 53-54. [In Ukrainian]

64 See: Press release for "The Mouth of Medusa" exhibition. – 1995. – 2 sheets. ("Exhibition "The Mouth of Medusa" has features of some experimental, original and, probably, the first test of artistic surroundings for their capability to accept feminist ideas.")

65 Briukhovetska, Oksana. Obraz zhertvy i emansypatsiia. Narys pro ukrainsky art-stsenu i feminism [The Victim Image and Emancipation. An Essay on the Ukrainian Art Scene and Feminism] // Prostory [Electronic source]. – March 3, 2017. – Retrieved from: http://prostory.net.ua/en/krytyka/139-obraz-zhertvy-i-emansypatsiia-narys-pro-ukrainsku-art-stsenu-i-feminizm [In Ukrainian]

66 Ibid.



Billboard of "The Mouth of Medusa" exhibition (1995).
Photo courtesy of Natalia Filonenko

Valeriia Troubina in a squat on Lenina Street (now Bohdana Khmelnytskoho Street). Kyiv. Early 1990s. Photo by Oleh Holosii. Photo courtesy of Valeria Troubina

37 Commenting on her installation at “The Mouth of Medusa” exhibition, Zoya Sokol says that she stayed well away fromof feminist ideas and created the work solely for the exhibition and on its curator’s initiative.[67] Filonenko, the curator of the exhibition, saw the topic in her own way as well. “What is your personal view of feminism?” the journalist asked. “I do not want to give up any kind of relationship with men. But I want to be free from their influence, I want to be able to be myself, independent of anyone,” Filonenko replied.[68]

Oksana Chepelyk consciously approached feminist themes. Commenting on her early works, the artist noted that she was interested in the topics of “oppression of women by the male world as a carrier of the totalitarian principle and the world of politics as a repressive and manipulative mechanism. It was important to pay attention to the sore spots. Meanwhile, the mainstream way of doing things then was to have fun, to be ironic, instead of raising critical issues.”[69] Here, she spoke of the installation performance series *The Mysteries of Moving Objects*, which included *The Birth of Venus* (1995), *The Traveling Island of Lesbos* (1996) and *Clothing as a Hiding Place* (1996). Throughout her career, Oksana Chepelyk tried to combine artistic and academic approaches. The artist was born to the family of Ukrainian architects Viktor Chepelyk and Zoya Moiseienko-Chepelyk. She is one of only a handful of creators who, in addition to attending a Ukrainian art school, obtained education abroad (she trained at the CIES in Paris in 1993). Apparently, knowledge of the international context and interest in literature influenced her choice of art themes in the early 1990s.

To a greater extent, “conscious feminism” has developed in Ukrainian art since the early 2000s. The artists began to create works endowed with feminist and political contexts. For example, the researcher of Ukrainian feminist art Tamara Zlobina begins the local history of feminist art with the works of Alevtina Kakhidze and Masha Shubina.[70] Exhibitions “Tenderness” (curator Olesia Ostrovska, the Center for Contemporary Art, 2003), “Gender in IZOLYATSIA: the Right to Self-Construction in the Conditions of Patriarchy” (curator Olena Oleksandra Chervonyk, the IZOLYATSIA Foundation, 2012), “What Is Female in Me?” (curator Oksana Briukhovetska, 2015), “Motherhood” (curator Oksana Briukhovetska, 2015), “TEXTUS. Embroidery, Textiles, Feminism” (curator Oksana Briukhovetska, 2017), “A Space of One’s Own” (curators Tatiana Kochubynska and Tetiana Zhmurko, PinchukArtCentre, 2018), and others create a new debate on the new history of feminist art in Ukraine.

Linda Nochlin concludes her text by reflecting on the “greatness” of artists and outsider artists. She emphasizes that women can use their situation as outsiders in the history of art, make it their own strength, and reveal institutional and intellectual weaknesses to the world.[71]

67 A personal communication to Kateryna Iakovlenko.

68 From the archive of Natalia Filonenko. The PinchukArtCentre Research Platform.

69 Hleba, Halyna. “Oksana Chepelyk: Ya rozpochala feministychnu abo gendernu temu zadovho do...” [Oksana Chepelyk: I Started Working on the Feminist or Gender Theme Long Before...] // *KORYDOR* [Electronic source]. – December 11, 2018.– Retrieved from: http://www.korydor.in.ua/ua/woman-in-culture/oksana-chepelik-feminizm-gender.html [In Ukrainian]

70 Zlobina, Tamara. “Istoriya ukrainskogo feministicheskogo iskusstva” [A History of Ukrainian Feminist Art] // *Feministskaya (art) krytyka* [Feminist (Art) Criticism]. – Kaunas: Taurapolis, 2015. – P. 322-352. [In Russian]; Zlobina, Tamara. “Maskarad zhinochnosty yak uspishna khudozhnia stratehiia” [Masquerade of Womanhood as a Successful Artistic Strategy] // *Krytyka*. – January-February 2011. – No. 1-2. – P. 23-24. [In Ukrainian]

71 Nochlin, Linda. ‘Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?’ (1971) // *Women Artists. The Linda Nochlin Reader* (Ed. By Maura Reily).– New York: Thames & Hudson, 2015. – P. 42-69.

Beginning in the 1960s, women artists and activists in the United States began to create feminist communities, institutions and organizations focused on the development of feminist art. One such center was the California Institute of the Arts, which Miriam Schapiro and Judy Chicago joined. As we can see from history, interesting figures, including artists, playwrights, and directors, have always congregated around Ukrainian women artists. However, if we refer to the National Academy of Fine Arts and Architecture as an example, no woman has ever served as the rector of this educational institution, because this position was reserved to men on every occasion. This is due to many factors — historical, political, economic and social — that have to do with the dominance of conservative views in society.

Today's striving to explore and understand our own trends and phenomena is what makes Ukrainian art interesting and attractive. It is here that one can engage in the search for answers and make historical discoveries. What used to be an outsider situation is becoming an advantage under the new conditions. The history of Ukrainian art as seen through the perspective of artists' practices is one of many such focuses.

This article contains more than fifty names of women artists who engaged in creative explorations and experiments. In all likelihood, this list should be supplemented and filled with historical details. The few analyzed artists' biographies and works included in this text open up another perspective on Ukrainian art, one filled with new challenges. Our historical finds of names and works not only establish that there were great women artists in Ukrainian art; they also show a complex and rich history of Ukrainian art and emphasize the common and distinctive features of the national art field in its relation to the global one.

The Pertsi Art Group: Liudmyla Skrypkina and Oleh Petrenko in the apartment of artist Leonid Voitsekhov. Odesa, 1984. Photo by Yuri Leiderman. Photo courtesy of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Odesa

Naïve (Un)Freedom. On the Oeuvre of Mariia Prymachenko and Kateryna Bilokur

TETIANA ZHMURKO

The oeuvre of two major artists of the twentieth century — Kateryna Bilokur and Mariia Prymachenko — was shaped during a difficult historical period that broke people's personalities and politicized the notion of "creative freedom" to an unprecedented extent. At first glance, their art was the least embedded in the Soviet ideological system and remained an island of "pure art," unlike the works of official artists who directly served the needs of the ideological machine.
However, even a cursory look at Bilokur's and Prymachenko's works reveals not a naïve take on the world, but a psychological trauma and deep experience of reality concealed by the endless flowers and anthropomorphic animals.
Such inconsistencies made up Soviet history as a whole, hiding the real fates of "little people" behind its "correct" narrative. How do these two different stories of the artists who never met and created very different works intersect? This article is not an attempt to bring them to a common denominator or, conversely, to emphasize their differences. Although, their works fell under the same category of "folk art" as defined in the Soviet era. It is an attempt to look at their oeuvre through the lens of the social and cultural context of the artists' development and a discussion of "(un) freedom" that keeps plaguing conversations about this kind of art.

Kateryna Bilokur. Collective Farm Field. 1948–1949. Oil on canvas. Photo courtesy of the National Museum of Ukrainian Folk Decorative Art (NMUFDA)

Why did precisely female images become such powerful “monuments” of the Soviet era, which eventually became part of that glorious myth of Ukraine which Oksana Kis calls “the myth of the Hearth Mother?” In the article *What Kind of Women’s History for Ukraine?*, the researcher, analyzes the origins of the Hearth Mother image in Ukrainian society and writes that “it is precisely Ukrainian womanhood that has become the translator and carrier of Ukrainian traditions.”[1] This image came from the discourse of the literary and folklore studies milieu, where the woman, mother and earth, was — and still is — the primordial carrier of the national virtues and Christian faith.[2] Folk artists who stereotypically embodied the spirit of Ukrainian nature and were the custodians of Ukrainian cultural codes undoubtedly became part of this myth, becoming folk deities, immune from art criticism and analysis.

Naïve art as an object of professional interest of artists and art critics appears at the turn of the 20th century. This was primarily connected with the modernist artists’ search for new means of expression. Naïve, childish language was a manifestation of the creative freedom which artists longed for so strongly, as opposed to boring academic art. The French Cubists were inspired by Iberian art and creative achievements of the peoples of Africa and Oceania, while their Russian and Ukrainian counterparts took their inspiration from rural folk culture, which stored chthonic creative energy capable of galvanizing the already dead “corpse” of academism. The naïve art acquired a special status in the Ukrainian context in the early 20th century when it entered into a kind of collaboration with professional avant-garde artists. Folk craftsmen and craftswomen became full participants of the process, as their works first served as an inspiration to avant-garde artists and then, in their turn, implemented avant-garde ideas. In 1910, Natalia Davydova organized a studio in the village of Verbivka (now Kamiansky District, Cherkasy Oblast), where creative communication between avant-garde and folk artists took place. In 1914, she invited Aleksandra Ekster to direct the studio. Ekster was followed by Kazimir Malevich, and folk craftswomen created embroideries based on avant-garde art designs. A similar studio, headed by artist Yevhenia Pribylskaya, existed in the village of Skoptsi (now Veselynivka, Baryshivka District, Kyiv Oblast). This creative collaboration brought to life a kind of language that combined folk and decorative principles with Cubist-Futuristic and Suprematistic compositions. Analyzing the features of the Ukrainian avant-garde, art historian Myroslava Mudrak emphasizes precisely the “interconnectedness of both these spheres of art production” and indicates “their compatibility with the modernist context.”[3]

Such creative teams discovered and formed an entire constellation of famous artists: Hanna Sobachko-Shostak, Paraska Vlasenko, Vasyl Dovhoshyia, Semen Pshechenko, and Tetiana Pata that became a certain brand of “real” Ukrainian art. Their works were displayed at exhibitions all over Europe: in Kyiv, Moscow, Berlin, Dresden, Munich, and Paris. For the early 20th century, the time of the search for national identity, folk art itself became an ultimate expression of it. It was considered that the countryside, with its cultural codes that existed for thousands of years, was capable of preserving cultural otherness. The search for national identity was a worldwide trend — it was connected with the new industrial realities of the 20th century and the movement of people from

1 Kis, Oksana. “Chy/yakoiu potribna Ukraini yiii zhinocha istoriia?” [What Kind of Women’s History for Ukraine?]// *Krytyka*. – 2013. – No. 1. – P. 18-21. [In Ukrainian]

2 See: Ibid.

3 Mudrak, Myroslava. *Ukrainsky avanhard/ukrainsky modernism 1910–1930* [Ukrainian Avant-Garde/Ukrainian Modernism 1910–1930] [Album]. – Khmelnytsky: Galereia, 2006. – P. 32. [In Ukrainian]

Anastasiia Semyhradova, Yevheniya Pribylskaya, and Yelyzaveta Semyhradova on the porch near the Semyhradovs’ manor house in the village of Skoptsi, Poltava Oblast. The NMUFDA. Fond 6. Opys 8. Sprava 1. Items 3, 4

The Semyhradova House in the village of Skoptsi, Poltava Oblast. The NMUFDA. Fond 6. Opys 8. Sprava 1. Items 3, 4

Mariia Prymachenko. A Drake Smokes a Pipe with Gloves On to Keep His Hands and Heels from Getting Burned. 1987. Photo courtesy of the Mariia Prymachenko family collection

the countryside to cities, which resulted in the formation of mobile social groups with weak self-identification. In his book *Culture Two*, Vladimir Paperny characterizes this period as one of "fluidity," "spreading-out" in contrast to the Stalinism era., In order to describe the culture of that period, he introduces the term "solidification", that means the strengthening of boundaries and the culture's return to its archaic "rural" channel.[4]

The myth of the Ukrainian village as the "cradle of national culture" was fully supported by the Stalinist cultural program, which closely linked it to the concept of the Motherland. Folk art/folklore became the basis of this program, legitimizing Primitivist artists in the Soviet system. Analyzing the phenomenon of "naïve" art in the Soviet era, Galyna Sklyarenko writes: "Soviet ideology immediately involved folklore in its propaganda program, turning it into a façade institution (to borrow Hannah Arendt's term), that was supposed to conceal its anti-democratic measures. The more severe the attack on the traditional foundations of peasant life, the more transformations imposed onto its natural structure, the more actively folk art was put into the 'first ranks of national culture', the more official support it received."[5]

It is significant that Prymachenko first appeared on the art map in 1936, in the midst of political repressions, which resulted in the destruction of an entire generation of modernist artists. Her works went on display at folk art exhibitions in Kyiv, Moscow, Leningrad (now St. Petersburg), and made it to the Soviet Pavilion at the World Exhibition in Paris as early as 1937. The artist was immediately invited to experimental studios functioning at the Kyiv State Museum, where she studied with such artists as Tetiana Pata, Paraska Vlasenko, and Natalia Vovk. Curator Alisa Lozhkina writes about it as follows: "A large-scale infrastructure of art centers and other mechanisms for finding and supporting self-taught artists was created in the 1930s. The campaign to promote amateur art was launched to demonstrate the implementation of the famous Stalinist slogan, 'Life has become better, life has become more joyous.'"[6] This argument is also made by historian Serhii Yekelchyk, who states: "Traditional and conservative as it was, the official culture of mature Stalinism promoted optimism and celebration."[7]

The mid-1930s was marked by the formation of Stalin's new policy on Soviet patriotism. The adoption of Stalin's Constitution in 1936 put forward, along with the class, a new category of "people" that legitimized the search for a historical foundation. The "strong and united family" was proclaimed as the foundation of the new society.[8] "The much-lauded Mother, associated with Mother Earth, was embodied in the traditional image of a healthy peasant woman."[9] It was precisely in the mid-1930s that Ivan Kavaleridze produced his opera films *Natalka-Poltavka* and *Cossacks beyond the Danube* (incidentally, Prymachenko watched the latter production while in Kyiv), where he poetized the myth of the Ukrainian village. Cultural historian Stanislav Menzelevskyi writes: "The peasant *(Natalka-Poltavka)* and the

4 See: Paperny, Vladimir, *Kultura Dva* [Culture Two] (Ed. by S. Zenkin). – Moscow: Novoye Literaturnoye Obozreniye, 1996. [In Russian]

5 Sklyarenko, Galyna. "'Naiivnyi khudozhnyk' u prostori XX stolittia" [The "Naïve Artist" in the 20th Century Timespace] / *Mariia Prymachenko 100. Statti, eseii, spohady, publikatsiii, prysviacheni storichchiu Marii Prymachenko* [Mariia Prymachenko 100. Articles, Essays, Memoirs, Source Publications Marking the Mariia Prymachenko Centennial] (Compiled by O. Naiden). – Kyiv: Rodovid, 2009. – P. 150. [In Ukrainian]

6 Lozhkina, Alisa. *Mystetstvo chystoho sertsia / Chyste mystetstvo* [Pure Heart Art/Pure Art]. – Kyiv: Rodovid, 2009. – P. 13. [In Ukrainian]

7 Yekelchyk, Serhii. *Istoriya Ukrayiny: Stanovleniye sovremennoy natsii* [A History of Ukraine: Formation of a Modern Nation] (Authorized transl. from English by M. Klymchuk). – Kyiv: K.I.S., 2009. – P. 175. [In Russian] Quoted here after the English original: *Ukraine: Birth of a Modern Nation*. – Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

8 *Istoriya zhenshchin na Zapade* [A History of Women in the West] (5 vols.) Vol. V: *Stanovleniye kultutnoy identichnosti v XX stoletii* [Toward a Cultural Identity in the Twentieth Century]. (Ed. by Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot; volume editor Françoise Thébaud). – St. Petersburg: Aleteya, 2015.– (Gendernyye issledovaniya [Gender Studies]). – P. 280. [In Russian]

9 Ibid. – P. 281-282.

cossack *(Cossacks beyond the Danube)* became definitive figures for the configuration of the Ukrainophile ideology and, as the subsequent history would show, the Ukrainian culture of the Stalinist era."[10]

The new image of Soviet Ukraine was communicated through the perspective of an agrarian, rural nation with fertile lands and happy creative peasants. It is worth mentioning that after the introduction of the policy of collectivization (the 1920s–1930s) and the emergence of the first collective farms, the peasants were effectively forced back into serfdom, as they were left without passports and, accordingly, without the right to freely leave the territory of their village. This regulation was in force between 1935 and 1974, creating an insurmountable civilizational chasm between the city and the village during the 20th century. This is noticeable even after a cursory glance at the women artists' wear: in winter, they wore heavy sweatshirts and rough headscarves stretched to cover the forehead; in summer, they wore embroidered shirts, long skirts, and the same face-hiding scarves. The appearance of the artists does not change throughout their lives, even in the 1960s, when fashion studios were already appearing in Soviet cities, and French and Italian fashion came into public view thanks to cinemas and magazines. The headscarf would remain a permanent attribute of rural women for many years, although its abandonment was actively promoted in the 1920s and 1930s.

The artists' fates were in many ways similar. Bilokur was first noticed and had her first small exhibition at the Poltava House of Folk Art in 1940. The image of Mariia Prymachenko and Kateryna Bilokur, lower-class women whose oeuvre was an amalgamation of folklore and life-giving popular energy, probably fit the new Soviet concept best. When viewed superficially, their works can be described as "celebratory and optimistic," easily understood by the people and designed to fill them with joyous and good feelings. "Folk" served as a kind of representative background: safe, non-threatening, "childish," capable of bringing forth the feeling of admiration alone. The artists were represented in precisely this way by the Ukrainian Soviet art criticism. Commonplace phrases such as "sunny, life-giving, phantasmagoric" were deployed to characterize their oeuvre, almost always leaving unconsidered the context and reasons for the artists choosing this style. Where does the image imposed by the Soviet ideology end up, and where do their real personalities begin? Perhaps, one should look into the artists' "rooms of their own," where they were left to themselves.

Prymachenko lived all her life in the village of Bolotnia, located in the Polissia Region, and almost never left her native village, unlike her works that traveled around the world. Kateryna Bilokur, born in the village of Bohdanivka, Cherkasy Oblast, had a similar life story. None of the artists had any chance to obtain professional training, although both were extremely keen on it.

In the traditional patriarchal coordinate system, in which the artists grew up, their place was clearly delineated and planned in advance for their entire lifespan: working at a *kolkhoz* and doing domestic chores. We know from the letters of Bilokur that she was only able to convince her parents to let her create art by threatening to commit suicide. "And why did it seem to them — to my family members, and relatives, and strangers, and

10 Menzelevskyi, Stanislav. "Kinoopera ta inshi zbochennia stalinskoho kinematohrafa" [Opera Film and Other Perversions of the Stalinist Cinema] / *Ivan Kavaleridze. Memuary. Dramaturhiia. Publitsystyka* [Ivan Kavaleridze. Memoirs. Scripts. Journalistic Works]. (Compiled by Stanislav Menzelevskyi). – Kyiv: Natsionalnyi Tsentr Oleksandra Dovzhenka, 2017. – P. 49. [In Ukrainian

to everyone — that painting was so foreign and unattainable for a female mind?" the artist wrote in a letter.[11] Bilokur spent her entire life as a single woman, devoting herself to painting despite everything. Her violation of the rural patriarchal norms also led to an image emerging of some "half-mad" woman who was mostly misunderstood and condemned by the public. The artist's fight for a "room of her own" involved challenging norms and stereotypes. However, the role of the state is of interest in this case, since it, on the one hand, acted as a more progressive side, granting Bilokur the status of an artist and accepting her as a member of the Union of Artists, but on the other hand, it forced her to stay in the countryside, preventing the painter from moving to the city or at least embarking on formal studies. We know from the letters how Bilokur suffered because she lived in a cold house without electricity: "I sit in a sheepskin coat near the stove. I have to bend double to conserve heat. Lermontov's pine dreamed that somewhere there was a sunny country where a lovely palm tree grew, and I sit and think that there are bright, warm, and cozy houses, lit by large windows in the daytime and by electricity at night. Those houses are warm and smoke-free. Oh, how much joyful work can be done in such houses even amidst cold winter and with sick feet."[12] Or: "And what I am to do given that I have no time to continue with my work? I have so many wonderful ideas! And how can it be that because of the stove, the ash, the goat, and the rags, I can't fulfill them?"[13] These quotes from the letters of Bilokur (the last one written when she was already the People's Artist of the Ukrainian SSR) are probably the best way to show the true mismatch between the Soviet system's claims and the actual position of folk artists within it. How could a member of the Union of Artists, whose works were exhibited at the international level, be unable to even work because of poverty, even though artists in the Soviet Union always were a privileged and well-to-do caste?

But at the same time, labeling such works as "naïve" (that is, folk) created a niche that made it possible for them to exist outside of Socialist Realism. This stylistically modernist art, which was a logical continuation of the formalistic searches of the early 20th century, was forced to develop and exist on the margins, being driven into the narrow frame of the "naïve." Having been relegated to the second rate, it became the "loophole" through which an entire generation of the sixties' artists was able to renew their artistic language. One can recall here Tetiana Yablonska's folklore cycle, in which she departs from the Socialist Realist canon and creates symbolic decorative compositions, finding prototypes for them in the folk art of Zakarpattia. But for Yablonska, a professor at Kyiv Art Institute, it was a conscious choice, just one of the possible ways of expanding her visual language, which it was not for Prymachenko and Bilokur.

Analyzing folk art, André Malraux states, "...Any folk art, independently of its linear style, seeks to preserve the style of the past, which is threatened by civilized forms which make up the basis of the aristocratic art..."[14] He continues, "All folk arts are elements of one common civilization that has been lost in time as others are lost in space; it is part of the mysterious (and clownish) world, but not the theater. In order to bring us something more than a little embarrassed joy, they lack only the forward-looking directionality, always inherent in genius..."[15]

11 Kateryna Bilokur [Album in 2 books] (Ed. by L. Lykhach). – Kyiv: Rodovid, 2010. – Book 1: *Kateryna Bilokur. Mystetska zapovid* [Kateryna Bilokur. The Artistic Commandment] (Compiled by O. Shestakova, N. Samruk). – 2010. – P. 22. [In Ukrainian]

12 Bilokur, Kateryna. *Ya budu khudozhnykom!* [I'll Be an Artist!]: [A documental story told through the letters of the artist and studies of Mykola Kaharlytsky] (Ed. and compiled by Mykola Kaharlytsky). – Kyiv: Spalakh LTD, 1995. – P. 117. [In Ukrainian]

13 Ibid. – P. 287.

14 Malraux, André. *Golosa bezmolviya* [The Voices of Silence] (Transl. from French by V.Yu. Bystrov; ed. and annotated by A. Shestakov). – St. Petersburg: Nauka, 2012. – P. 582. [In Russian]

15 Ibid. – P. 585-586.

Looking at the artistic world of Prymachenko and Bilokur, one can agree with Malraux's definition: it is a world lost in time and space, a world inhabited by myths and legends that give birth to strange creatures and human-like flowers, and a world hardly touched by civilization. But this is only partially true. The color scheme used by the painters cannot be called "naïve" in any way. It is far from a simple "folk picture," which usually combines several contrasting colors, painted in a neat static mass. Prymachenko's color scheme is more complex, it cannot be found in nature. The artist feels free to juxtapose different shades in her search for unexpected color choices. Both artists use naïve art as a basis on which they develop their original styles.

Bilokur's works stand even further from the "naïve picture." Her flowers are complex multilevel compositions, essentially similar to the Dutch still lifes of the 17th and 18th centuries. Bouquets made of different seasonal flowers are close to still lifes of the *vanitas* category, where beauty is only a symbol of the transience of time. They restate the inevitability of old age rather than expressing a naïve admiration of beauty. "The transience of time — both in nature and human life — is one of the major philosophical categories of the artist's oeuvre," researcher Olena Shestakova writes.[16]

The similarity between Bilokur's works and the Dutch painting school is not accidental. In 1940, the artist made a two-week trip to Moscow, where she was able to visit the State Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts and to see, among other things, works of the Dutch masters. However, it is less about the outward resemblance and more about the creator's approach in general. The bouquets and vegetables on her still lifes seem to reflect a strange mirror universe, where food and flowers flow from the horn of plenty, even though these works were written in the poverty-stricken, hungry 1940s and 1950s. This feeling is only intensified by the deep blue color that is present in most works, which seems to be the color of oblivion, sleep, or emptiness that tells its own story: a story of memory, loneliness, and desolation. This is the case, even though it responds to the canonical depiction of "fertility and prosperity," a necessary attribute of all Stalinist art, despite the pervasive hunger and poverty.

Bilokur's work *Collective Farm Field,* created in the late 1940s, is of interest in this regard. Almost the entire space of the canvas is occupied by a dense mass of flowers in the foreground, like in a decorative panel. It is suddenly replaced by a small opening in this green carpet, which appears at the top of the composition, looking like a window that offers a view into the endless space beyond. And although we know from the title of the work that it is just an ordinary *kolkhoz* field, it is more like a calm sea surface with a small island in the middle, with smooth transitions into the sky. The work creates a feeling of peeking into the outside world, hidden behind a beautiful but dense fence that cannot be scaled.

The pictorial world of Mariia Prymachenko is a similar mirror universe, inhabited by strange clawed creatures with sad eyes. One can hardly describe her animals as "kind." In the early works of the 1930s and 1940s, they look like confused stuffed toys that were taken out of the box but never put back. The artist does not name them referring to them by colors only: *Brown Beast, Red Monkey,* etc. In the post-war period, they became aggressive, even predatory, growing claws and sharp teeth. These were no longer small stuffed animals, now they could even attack. The war experience and the loss of the

16 Bilokur, Kateryna. *Ya budu khudozhnykom!* [I'll Be an Artist!]: [A documental story told through the letters of the artist and studies of Mykola Kaharlytsky] (Ed. and compiled by Mykola Kaharlytsky). – Kyiv: Spalakh LTD, 1995. – P. 108. [In Ukrainian]

Kateryna Bilokur. Flowers and Nuts. 1948.
Oil on canvas. Photo courtesy of the NMUFDA

artist's husband shaped a tougher view of the world where the real is sometimes replacing the fictional. Prymachenko began to accompany her later works with texts, often inscribing them on the reverse, as if she absolutely needed to express some idea and felt that images alone did not suffice for it.

The painter did not evade the issues of the Cold War and the Chernobyl disaster. Her fierce criticism was expressed through images and texts, such as that in her "address" to the American president, inscribed on the reverse of a 1986 painting: "Mr. Reagan, look at this picture and ponder how heavy, weighty, and stupid this atomic thing is. Look at it, and then make peace with us for the sake of peace on Earth. The atomic thing is pretty, but toying with it may leave one's family bereaved."

Prymachenko's works are also characterized by a subtle irony evident even in titles, such as *This Beast Is Scolding Others, but Nobody Is Afraid of It or No Such Monkeys Have Ever Been Seen Before, over Billions of Years*. She composed her texts in the form of folk sayings, and they often rhymed:
"A pig
arrived in Ukraine.
She has a long snout.
She wants to
bury Ukrainian flowers.
But they are (sown?) and wet with tears.
They are old
and have established
roots all over Ukraine.
So they will bloom
and bring joy to people..."[17]

Flowers occupy an important place in Prymachenko's oeuvre. The artist depicted both them and animals as human-like creatures, often endowing them with eyes: *Plants of Joy (Disheveled Animals), Little Eyed Flowers*. It seems to the viewer that little beings locked in flower bodies look at the world. They easily became parts of beasts or birds after getting intertwined with their bodies. For the painter, flowers were a symbol of life, of the wisdom transmitted from the earth which preserved the memory of bygone times.

When analyzing characteristic features of Prymachenko's artistic thinking, Tamara Hundorova associated it with the notion of "phantasm" as "a special sphere of imagery, a concept of Lacanian psychoanalysis."[18] It is "a window into the world of desires, it serves as a door into the symbolic, it encodes the world and establishes the framework for exploring individual desires."[19] "This kind of fantastic vision is not a dream world, but a topological structure that creates the world on its own. After all, the Real is unknowable and unrepresentable. It is like a world beyond the window that cannot be explored unless there is a framework through which it can be viewed. Therefore, in the real emptiness, the artist sees an unreachable trauma which is covered by symbolic images."[20]

17 Here is an adapted text by Prymachenko, written on the reverse of the picture "Pig arrived in Ukraine" in 1989.
18 Hundorova, Tamara. "Fantasmy Marii Prymachenko" [Phantasms of Mariia Prymachenko] / *Mariia Prymachenko 100. Statti, esei, spohady, publikatsii, prysviacheni storichchiu Marii Prymachenko* [Mariia Prymachenko 100. Articles, Essays, Memoirs, Source Publications Marking the Mariia Prymachenko Centennial] (Compiled by O. Naiden). – Kyiv: Rodovid, 2009. – P. 174. [In Ukrainian]
19 Ibid. – P. 174-175.
20 Ibid. – P. 174.

When examining the works of Prymachenko, it is difficult to identify individual works in the analysis, they are all fragments of one "world picture" created by the artist, an imperfect world populated by carnivorous animals, stern birds, and strange flowers. However, they all try to reconcile and live together. Having lost her husband in the war and raised her son on her own, limping throughout her life as a result of a childhood polio attack, the painter continued to work hard as if trying to prove that, in spite of everything, an ideal world that would exist in harmony was possible. A world where a constrictor would not eat a gingerbread man sitting in its mouth and a red beast can be not scary.

Prymachenko's and Bilokur's oeuvre is much more complex than it seems at first sight. It exists in discontinuities, discrepancies, and cracks of different systems, which is why it is so difficult to interweave it into any coherent, well-built narrative. Their creative activity, which combined the real with the fictional and the externally constructed, is difficult to analyze from a historiographical or biographical perspective. Meanwhile, their art, which is based on its folk origins and continues the interrupted modernist line, which has the formal rather than the narrative element thriving and developing — such art fits better into the international context rather than the Ukrainian one. The complex, multi-layered oeuvre of these women artists, reduced by the Soviet art criticism to the simple definition of "naïve" and automatically "inserted" into the conversation about the national culture since Ukraine's independence, was and still remains a prisoner of myths and legends, patiently waiting for its researchers.

A Place for Harmony: Yuliia Ukader's Sensual Plasticity

TATIANA KOCHUBINSKA

Conceptualizing one's own personality and expressing oneself through the corporeal, much less erotic, was not a priority for the Soviet culture and art. The body was portrayed as capable of reaching national objectives, and it was primarily a phenomenon of political and social manifestation. However, "when a truly great master appears [...], we find out that the official art begins to radiate uncontrollable meanings."[1] Such uncontrollable meanings can also be found in the sculptural works of Yuliia Ukader (1923-2008), an artist who placed the sensuality, expressed through the conceptualization of the human body at the forefront of her oeuvre. The analysis of the artist's work which I am offering in this article raises the question of whether it was possible in the post-war Soviet art to ponder the individual through the plasticity of the body and to express personal vulnerability.

1 Yakimovich, Aleksandr. *Polyoty nad bezdnoy. Iskusstvo, kultura, kartina mira. 1930–1990* [Flying over the Abyss. Art, Culture, and Picture of the World. 1930–1990]. – Moscow: Art-XXI century, 2009. – P. 286. [In Russian]

The Sun Is Rising (a clay model, 1963) in the studio on Filatova Street. Kyiv, 1963.
Photo courtesy of the artist's family

Yuliia Ukader in wartime. Stalingrad (now Volgograd), 1942. The author of the photo is unknown. Photo courtesy of the artist's family

Yuliia Ukader. 1943. Pictured while serving in the air defense of lend-lease shipments in the Murmansk Port. Murmansk, 1943. The author of the photo is unknown. Photo courtesy of the artist's family

In her analysis of the real biographies and the construction of the literary images of partisans Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya and Lisa Tchaikina, researcher Adrianna Harris emphasizes the creation of an obligatory love storyline that, in her opinion, "supports a Stalinist wartime policy, which survived in the post-war years, namely promoting an ideal femininity with its maternal potential and placing an emphasis on the body, the potential body of the woman as mother."[2] This statement makes one think about the semantic load that the body could carry in Soviet art. The corporeal dimension became primarily political in nature or contributed to the affirmation of social roles declared by the state. For example, a female image was underpinned by the mother archetype used to denote the love for the Motherland. However, this archetype changed with the transformations of the Soviet state.

2 Harris, Adrianna. "Stalinskaya liniya i vydumannye zhenikhi: rol lyubovnoy linii v povestvovaniyakh o geroyakh Vtoroy mirovoy voyny" [The Stalin Line and the Fictional Bridegrooms: The Role of the Love Storyline in Tales of World War II Heroes] // *Novoye literaturnoye obozreniye*. – 2013. – No. 6. – Retrieved from: https://www.nlobooks.ru/magazines/novoe_literaturnoe_obozrenie/124_nlo_6_2013/article/10692/?sphrase_id=24034&fbclid=IwAR17WmRWs%20WQoU18a-NRZEONCNezmgWsc2dJV8nn3O6KLkd7QxvYwM1wn820 [In Russian]

The personality of Yuliia Ukader was formed precisely in the transition period between the paradigms used to perceive the female body and the image of a woman. The artist was born in an era "characterized by the dominance of the heroic myth."[3] This myth was replaced in the 1930s, after "the canonization of popular culture, with something qualitatively new appearing in the public psyche — some feminine, maternal element, harking back to archaic ideas."[4] There began the development of a cult of the Motherland, as personified in the image of a female warrior. Ukader knew about the war firsthand, for she served in it as a soldier.[5] Like almost everyone else in the generation born in the 1920s, the future artist did not really have a childhood, and became an orphan at the age of 16.
"On the day of our graduation, the war began. We learned about this during a sports festival at the stadium in Birsk. At that time, we had no idea what that meant. We bid a sadness-tinged farewell to our childhood on Sokolok Mountain throughout the night. And in the morning, our entire class came to the Komsomol town committee and volunteered to go to the front," Ukader recalled.[6] This generation grew up very quickly, as their friends were dying in terrible ways in plain sight. Apparently, the corporeal in their perception is about the phantoms of torn flesh and bodies burnt alive; about human beings transformed into disfigured human mass, and these images laid the heavy burden in the artist's memory throughout her life.

In defiance of the traumatic experience and horrors of the war, the artist saw, throughout her life, the purpose of her art in "bringing a high divine harmony to people."[7] She embodied this harmony in the images of naked bodies: mostly female, but also male.
"For Ukader, bodies are precisely about plasticity, they serve as a way of speaking and talking about war and life," researcher Kateryna Iakovlenko remarks.[8] In Ukader's works, the body is perfect, harmonious, but not in the sense of the Soviet body, disciplined and hardened by toil and sports. It is a body that models itself on classical Greek examples. A body that is centered on itself, on its internal balance and harmony. Tapping into classical antiquity was probably a way to strike a balance in the post-war reality and to overcome the traumatic experience of the war. The artist ultimately failed to complete two sculptures she dedicated to her friends who had died during the Second World War.[9] Art critic Liudmyla Lysenko wrote that "the majestic physicality of Maillol's nudes was called upon, to use the figurative expression of Gleb Uspensky, to straighten the crumpled soul of modernity."[10] The same can be said of Ukader, who turned to a perfect sensual body in her oeuvre as opposed to the horrors she had experienced.

Yuliia Ukader began painting while still a child, as she was taught by her mother, Yevheniya Ivanovna Alekseyeva, who was a schoolteacher and came from a family of Siberian merchants. During the war, when the artist's division was stationed in Murmansk, Ukader became fascinated with the nature of the Arctic, which also influenced her future artistic method. There, she met artists Yevheny Rastorguev and Valentin Yevtutov, who

3 Günther, Hans. "Arkhetipy sovetskoy kultury" [Archetypes of Soviet Culture] / *Sotsrealisticheskiy kanon* [The Socialist Realist Canon]. – St. Petersburg: Academic Project, 2000. – P. 743-784. – Retrieved from: https://media.ls.urfu.ru/493/1258/2726/2592/1235 [In Russian]
4 Ibid.
5 After the battle of Stalingrad, which she served in as a balloon rigger, she was promoted to corporal of the air defense troops.
6 Ibid.
7 Kliuchkovska, Halyna. "Komentari" [Comments] // *ART Ukraine*. – 2008. – No. 3. – P. 40. [In Ukrainian]
8 Iakovlenko, Kateryna. „Kola pamyati" [Memory Circles] // *Krytyka*. – 2017. – No. 9. – P. 37. [In Ukrainian]
9 Ibid.
Ukader wanted to dedicate these two sculptures to her fallen friend Dusya Russkikh and a colleague who lost her love.
10 Lysenko, Liudmyla. *Posibnyk "Skulpturni ideii XX stolittia"* [Sculptural Ideas of the Twentieth Century. A Handbook]. [Manuscript]. [In Ukrainian]

respected her interest in the arts.[11] In 1946, she was admitted to the Institute of Decorative and Applied Arts in Moscow, where the renowned Aleksandr Deyneka (1899–1969) served as rector. She studied under the sculptor Ekaterina Belashova (1906–1971), who, in turn, was a graduate of the Higher Institute of Arts and Technology and a graduate student of Aleksandr Matveyev (1878–1960) at the Institute of Proletarian Arts in Leningrad (now St. Petersburg). It seems that Ukader inherited her special sensuality and the ability to perceive the surrounding reality in an unusual way from Belashova: "Life is fantastic, you just need to lift the veil of common sense, and it will appear in front of you," Belashova used to say.[12] Ukader continued her studies at the Kyiv State Institute of Arts, where she completed her sculpture training at Mykhailo Lysenko's (1906–1972) studio in 1952.

Lysenko's sculpture *Faithfulness* (1947), was blasted by critics of the time as "an immoral work with a symbolic-erotic element."[13] However, when Ukader graduated from the Institute, a less inhibited approach to the corporeal emerged, which was linked, among other things, to the idea of rebuilding the nation, by means of active child-bearing. Therefore, the image of the female body was primarily expressed as the reflection of the woman's social role as a mother. In the magazines of that time, the body of a Soviet man, according to Yekaterina Vikulina, "flourished under rigorous medical control."[14] However, the bodies depicted by Ukader are not hardened, they are "devoid of control." In her works, motherhood does not convey the pathos of nation-building through the birth of a new person; rather, it is about a cult of closeness and sensuality; it is not a call for childbirth, but an appeal to the natural. In her work *Tenderness* (1978), a female figure and a baby that clings to her breast form a single indivisible monolith. They seem to permeate each other, demonstrating the umbilical connection between a woman and a child. Carved from a single granite block, the sculpture mimics Egyptian cubic statues that created a sense of the world's indestructibility, while in the case of Ukader, it expresses the indestructibility of universal feelings of love and harmony.

Despite its grandeur and monumentality, the sculpture oeuvre of Ukader is full of languor and submissiveness, in the first place. Her *Noon* (1967) is a full-height female figure who has strikingly massive curves and large, strong legs. Her strength evokes the works of Sergey Konenkov and Vera Mukhina, but it belongs to a different dimension. The female image carved by Ukader is not a politicized image of the all-seeing mother-protectress; this image is directed towards oneself, to the expression of individual feelings. The female figure seems to be dazzled by the sun; it is organically connected to the world. Movement chiasmus adds harmony to it. To some extent, it resembles Praxiteles's art, which Boris Vipper defined as "soft and passive." "Nothing comes to mind except for the happiness of the morning," Belashova described her work *Dawn* (1966).[15] It seems that Ukader inherited from her first teacher such sensuality, an awareness of the happiness present in the here and now, an understanding of herself in harmony with the world. The body depicted in *Noon* is imbued with a sense of dignity. It is not a body that has to nourish a child or to perform any other useful function.

11 Yuliia Ukader. *Skulptura. Keramika* [Yuliia Ukader. Sculpture. Ceramics] (Exhibition catalog) (Introduction by Liudmyla Lysenko). – Kyiv: TOV Emirat, 2004. – P. 3. [In Ukrainian]

12 Zuikova, T. and Romanova O. *Portret nezabyvayemogo vremeni* [A Portrait of an Unforgettable Time] // Tretyakovskaya Galereya. – 2007. – No. 1. – P. 58. [In Russian]

13 *Materialy naukovo-praktychnoii konferentsii "Tradytsii skulpturnoii shkoly Mykhaila Lysenka v konteksti suchasnoii yevropeiskoii skulptury", 16–17 lystopada 2006 roku* [Proceedings of the Studio and Conference "Traditions of the Mykhailo Lysenko Sculpture School in the Context of Contemporary European Sculpture", November 16–17, 2006]. The National Arts Museum of Ukraine. – Kyiv, 2006. – P. 2. [In Ukrainian]

14 Vikulina, Yekaterina. "Reprezentatsiya gendera v sovetskoy fotografii 'Ottepeli'" [Gender Representation in Soviet Photography of the Thaw Period] // *Sovremenny diskurs-analiz*. – 2011. – Retrieved from: http://www.discourseanalysis.org/ada5/st37.shtml. [In Russian]

15 Zuikova, T.; Romanova O. *Portret nezabyvayemogo vremeni* [A Portrait of an Unforgettable Time] // Tretyakovskaya Galereya.– 2007. – No. 1. – P. 65. [In Russian]

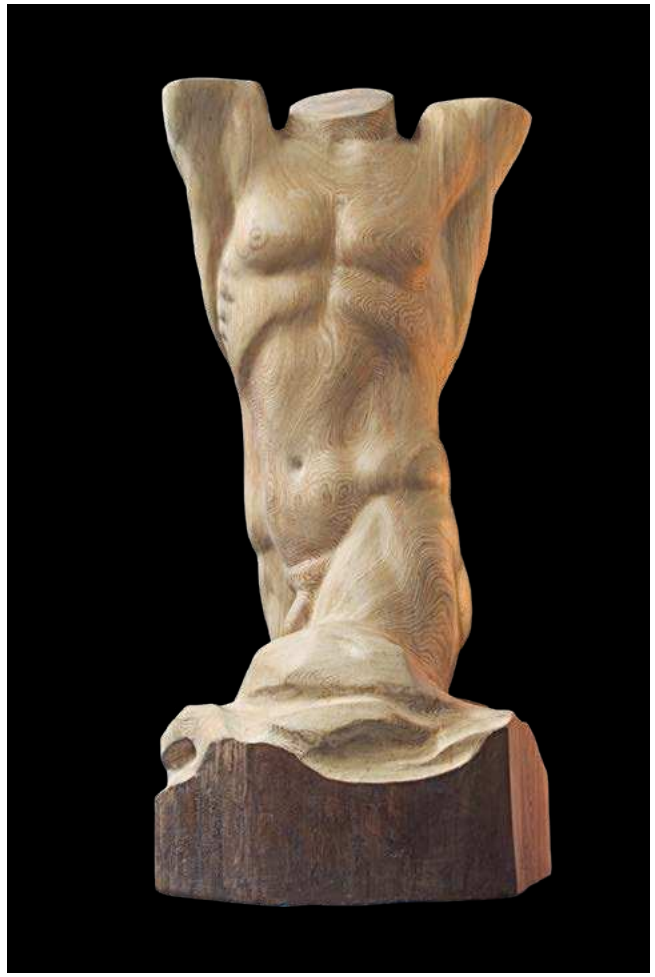
Yuliia Ukader. Noon. 1967. Plexiglas, metal. Photo courtesy of the artist's family

Yuliia Ukader. Spring Water. 1972. Siberian larch.
Photo by Serhii Filimonov. Photo courtesy of the artist's family

It impresses with its self-sufficiency and unforced perfection. Naked breasts have no functional justification here. The body seems to rejoice in its balance, its awareness of itself. The woman's pose is reminiscent of that of a sower, but Ukader avoided the social specification of her characters and often chose abstract names for her works. She used universal, unpretentious names that appeal to nature, such as *The Dream Grass*, *Spring Water*, and *To the Sun*.

The two-figure composition *The Sun Is Rising*, exhibited at the 1963 Republican Art Exhibition and included in its catalog (published in Kyiv in 1964), evidently depicts a pair of communist youth — a girl and a young man. They stand next to a sheaf of rye or wheat, which shows that this is a classic story from the history of Socialism building and the life of working-class youth. However, the figures are distinguished by their leisureliness and carelessness; their postures are calm and majestic, shrouded in midday languor and soporific fatigue. Ukader said that "the sculptor has to keep here on earth the energy that radiates to the sun and emits light."[16] Ukader's sculptures evoke associations with the last shots of Oleksander Dovzhenko's film *Earth* (1930), where apples and pears, illuminated by the sun shining through rain seem to be split into natural elements. As noted by Bohdan Nebesio, "the interest in human nature minimizes the significance of the revolutionary change in this film."[17] Aleksandr Yakimovich establishes that the essence of Dovzhenko's film is "body and corporeality, eros, sun, water, tree, and fruits of the earth."[18] The researcher sees the possibility of salvation in the appeal to the elemental, shamanic, and ritualistic: "In totalitarian societies, ideologies are set up in such a way that they enable their carriers and consumers to enter a state of delusions, chaos, and animality and to resort to certain forms of magic, shamanism and formally culturally banned practices and rituals of transcending one's humanity."[19] In the works of Ukader, the natural and the archaic intertwine with personal experience, philosophy, and origin, as the artist was born and was raised in the Ural Mountains, and "she retained childhood memories of the incomprehensible beauty of the world around her."[20] Already in the early 1970s, the sculptor created torsos, both male and female, in which she presented the naked body in fragments, without filling it with narrative details. The body exists in its self-sufficiency, and only the titles of the works reveal the artist's fascination with the mythology, in particular, the characters of Lesia Ukrainka's *Forest Song* are often featured in Ukader's oeuvre. The artist appealed to the archaic because she was convinced that "sculpture is the carrier of immortal energy."[21] Ukader called herself "a heathen, that is, a person who perceives the outside world as a living organism."[22] This is reflected in the choice of material — she often worked with wood at the time, especially with Siberian larch, "whose sculptural properties she was the first to discover. [...] She inventively and inimitably used the texture of this surprisingly plastic sort of wood. The texture of the larch wood, with its pulsating rhythm of concentric circles, seems to have been specially created to express the incredible beauty of the female body."[23] The artist believed that wood offered her the best way to express her feelings: "Nothing can compare to wood in terms of warmth, patterns, and plasticity."[24]

16 Ukader, Yuliia. *Skulptura. Keramika* [Yuliia Ukader. Sculpture. Ceramics] (Exhibition catalog) (Introduction by Liudmyla Lysenko).– Kyiv: TOV Emirat, 2004. – P. 4. [In Ukrainian]
17 Nebesio, Bohdan. *Nima kinotrylohiia Oleksandra Dovzhenka* [The Silent Film Trilogy by Oleksander Dovzhenko]. – Kyiv: Natsionalny Tsentr Oleksandra Dovzhenka, 2017. – P. 68. [In Ukrainian]
18 Yakimovich, Aleksandr. *Polyoty nad bezdnoy. Iskusstvo, kultura, kartina mira. 1930–1990* [Flying over the Abyss. Art, Culture, and Picture of the World. 1930–1990]. – Moscow: Art-XXI century, 2009. – P. 278. [In Russian]
19 Ibid. – P. 279.
20 Ukader, Yuliia. *Skulptura. Keramika* [Yuliia Ukader. Sculpture. Ceramics] (Exhibition catalog) (Introduction by Liudmyla Lysenko). – Kyiv: TOV Emirat, 2004. – P. 3. [In Ukrainian]
21 Ibid. – P. 4.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
24 Kliuchkovska, Halyna. "Komentari' [Comments] // *ART Ukraine*. – 2008. – No. 3. – P. 40. [In Ukrainian]



Yuliia Ukader. He Who Rends the Dikes. 1990. Siberian larch. Photo by Serhii Filimonov. Photo courtesy of the artist's family

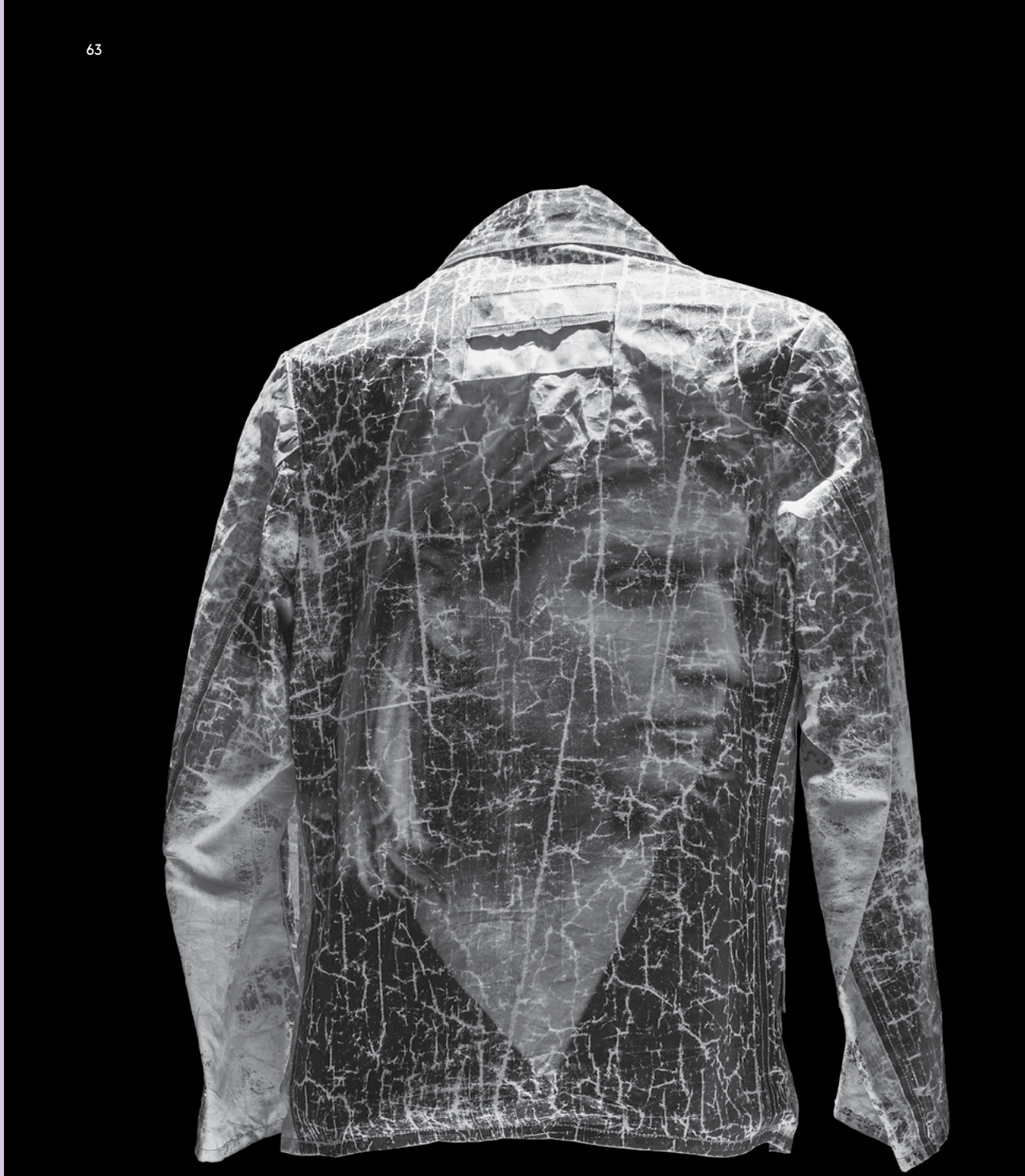
Despite the genre approach, narrative orientation, and propensity for calls to action required by the Soviet art system, Ukader often created compositions that did not narrate anything and existed outside any genre. The sculptor created surprisingly subtle and erotic images. Benefiting from the plasticity of her chosen material, she emphasized the curves of the body, its trembling and excitement. While her stone works featured noticeable affinity with Praxitelean grandeur and elegance, Ukader used wooden sculptures to reveal the properties of the texture of the wood and to emphasize its sensual exaltation to such an extent that it brought these images closer to the Scopasian passion and endless movement.

Surprisingly corporeal, sometimes even erotic, images which Ukader created from wood lack the burden of political and social meanings that the body was traditionally loaded with in the official state rhetoric. Ukader, who was a member of the Union of Artists of the Ukrainian SSR (later the National Union of Artists of Ukraine) from 1956 and participated in numerous republic-level exhibitions, also worked on government commissions in the field of monumental art. In her oeuvre, she treated the body without any regard to the excessively agenda-driven narrative and the genre qualities or historicity demanded at that time. Existing and developing within the limits of the Socialist Realist art, which relied on antiquity to a significant extent, Ukader conveyed personal feelings in her sculptures, focusing, among other things, on human desire and enticing.

A milk Portion for Working in Hazardous Conditions: Sexuality, Physicality, and Intimate Space in the Ukrainian Art of the 1990s

HALYNA HLEBA
KATERYNA IAKOVLENKO

This article is an attempt to interpret the 1990s Ukrainian art through the lens of feminist and gender themes.
This text examines the role and place of a woman on the artistic scene of the time. It is also an attempt to answer the following questions: How did the female and male images change? What was considered intimate and erotic? What artistic manifestations could be considered feminist? Why was not clearly articulated feminism manifested in the Ukrainian art in the early 1990s? Also, why does the oeuvre of Ukrainian women artists remain little known to researchers even now?



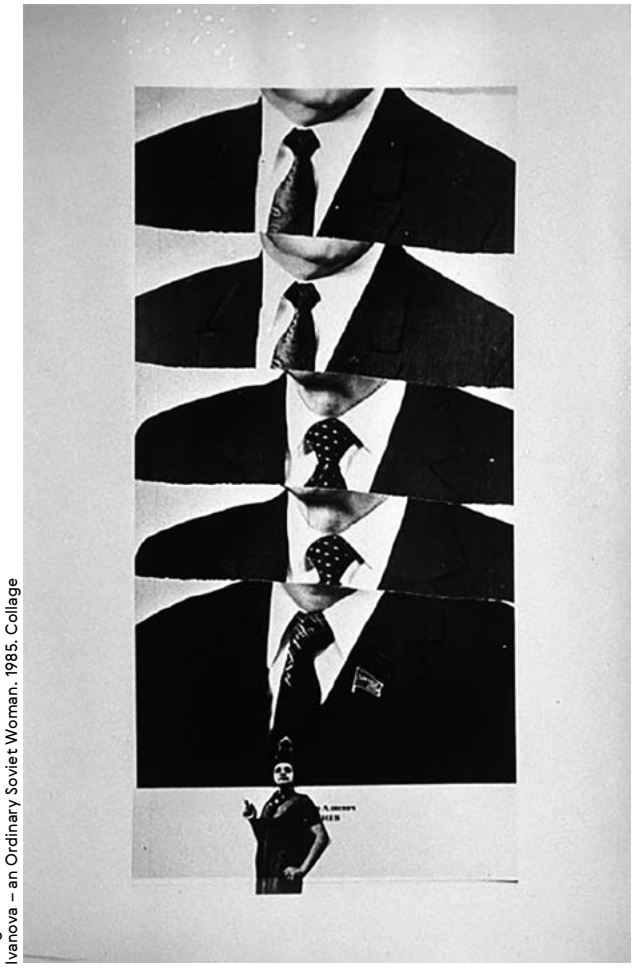
Ilya Chichkan. Fragment of A Milk Portion for Working in Hazardous Conditions installation. 1996. Photo by Yevhenii Nikiforov. Photo courtesy of the press service of the Mystetskyi Arsenal National Art and Culture Museum Complex and the Collection of Borys Hryniov and Tetiana Hryniova

If every cook must learn how to govern the country, according to Vladimir Lenin's famous dictum, then every woman is granted a position in power structures.[1] This phantom position of the female manager was pictured by Kharkiv artist Sergei Bratkov in his 1985 collage series *Vira Frantsivna Ivanova — an Ordinary Soviet Woman*. The artist used the average woman's image from the Soviet magazine *Rabotnitsa* and inserted a regular female worker into the political elite, placing her picture alongside portraits of the General Secretary and members of his governing apparatus. In this way, the author created a fantasy visual construct where a woman occupied the central place in the political life of the USSR.

In the opinion of Ukrainian literary critic Solomiia Pavlychko, the ambivalent attitude and interpretation of the female role in political and social life was a defining feature ofdefined the turn of the 1980s period.[2] She described social developments of the early 1990s as the "stage of the shock of freedom."[3] Pavlychko explained that the cultural vacuum was replaced, on the one hand, by a recovered and revitalized national mentality with elements of rural culture, and on the other, by the assimilation of Western cultural manifestations of freedom in the form of beauty pageants, popularity of plastic fashion, dumbing down of the public mind through TV soap operas, and the emergence of pornography as a category of female beauty.[4]

Artist Viktoria Parkhomenko was closely associated with the modeling industry.
At the same time, she created critical artistic projects in which she conceptualized the woman's place and role in society. Together with Natalia Radovinska, she created an installation made of stencil photo collages, entitled *For Those Who Can Knit* (1992), in which the artists depicted each other as characters featured in Soviet women's magazines.
The artists accompanied their own portraits with a sarcastic text that reproduced the ideological excess of the Soviet glossy press, ridiculed it, and problematized politically-driven attempts to impose the Soviet female ideal even after the collapse of the USSR.

The artists, who were active in the early 1990s, were squeezed between the old system that was already barely functioning and the newly created "clan system" of the artistic scene, which artist Oksana Chepelyk describes in her interviews.[5] According to her, women artists either joined some isolated community, found themselves on the periphery if they created social-critical art which was unpopular at the time[6], or established close connections between their practice of arts and work in related fields, which literally influenced the artists' choice of themes and aesthetics, with such fields including theater,



Sergei Bratkov. From the series Vira Frantsivna Ivanova – an Ordinary Soviet Woman. 1985. Collage

teaching, architecture, illustration, and literature.[7] For example, Valeria Troubina from Kyiv created scenery and costumes for performances of the Lesia Ukrainka National Academic Theater of Russian Drama, Iryna Nirod from Lviv constructed scenic compositions in her easel works and worked at a theater, while Larysa Rezun-Zvezdochetova from Odesa used a theatrical wing flat as a module symbol in her art.[8]

Most artists found no problem with the contemporary social system, which used patriarchal models in a new way. Economic problems and the daily need to feed their own families were experienced by women far more acutely than patriarchal patterns.
As for the themes that we can now subject to feminist or gender-based interpretation,

1 But, as we know from the history of the Soviet era, women only ever occupied niche humanitarian sectors and never became full-fledged members of the USSR's senior management layer in charge of strategic positions. See more here: Ayvazova, Svetlana. "Sovetskiy variant 'gosudarstvennogo feminizma'" [The Soviet Version of "State Feminism"] // *Gendernoye ravenstvo v kontekste prav cheloveka* [Gender Equality in the Context of Human Rights]. – Retrieved from: http://www.owl.ru/win/books/gender/11.htm [In Russian]

2 See more here: Tolstoy, Ivan; Gavrilov, Andrey. "Zhenshchina kak inakomysliye" [The Woman as Dissent] // *Radio Svoboda*. – December 17, 2017. – Retrieved from: https://www.svoboda.org/a/28925140.html [In Russian]

3 Pavlychko, Solomiia. "Feminizm yak mozhlyvyi pidkhid do analizu ukraiinskoii kultury" [Feminism as a Possible Approach to the Analysis of Ukrainian Culture] / *Feminizm* [Feminism] (A collection of articles, ed. by Vira Ageyeva). – Kyiv: Vydavnytstvo Solomiii Pavlychko "Osnovy," 2002. – P. 30-31. [In Ukrainian]

4 Pavlychko, Solomiia. "Posttotalitarna kultura yak nosii znevahy do zhinok" [Post-Totalitarian Culture as a Carrier of Contempt for Women] / *Feminizm* [Feminism] (A collection of articles, ed. by Vira Ageyeva). – Kyiv: Vydavnytstvo Solomiii Pavlychko "Osnovy," 2002. – P. 63-64. [In Ukrainian]

5 Hleba, Halyna. "Oksana Chepelyk: Ya rozpochala feministychnu abo gendernu temu zadovho do..." [Oksana Chepelyk: I Started Working on the Feminist or Gender Theme Long Before...] // *KORYDOR* [Electronic source]. – December 11, 2018.– Retrieved from: http://www.korydor.in.ua/ua/woman-in-culture/oksana-chepelik-feminizm-gender.html [In Ukrainian]

6 Hleba, Halyna. Oksana Chepelyk: Ya rozpochala feministychnu abo gendernu temu zadovho do... [Oksana Chepelyk: I Started Working on the Feminist or Gender Theme Long Before...] // *KORYDOR* [Electronic source]. – December 11, 2018.– Retrieved from: http://www.korydor.in.ua/ua/woman-in-culture/oksana-chepelik-feminizm-gender.html [In Ukrainian]

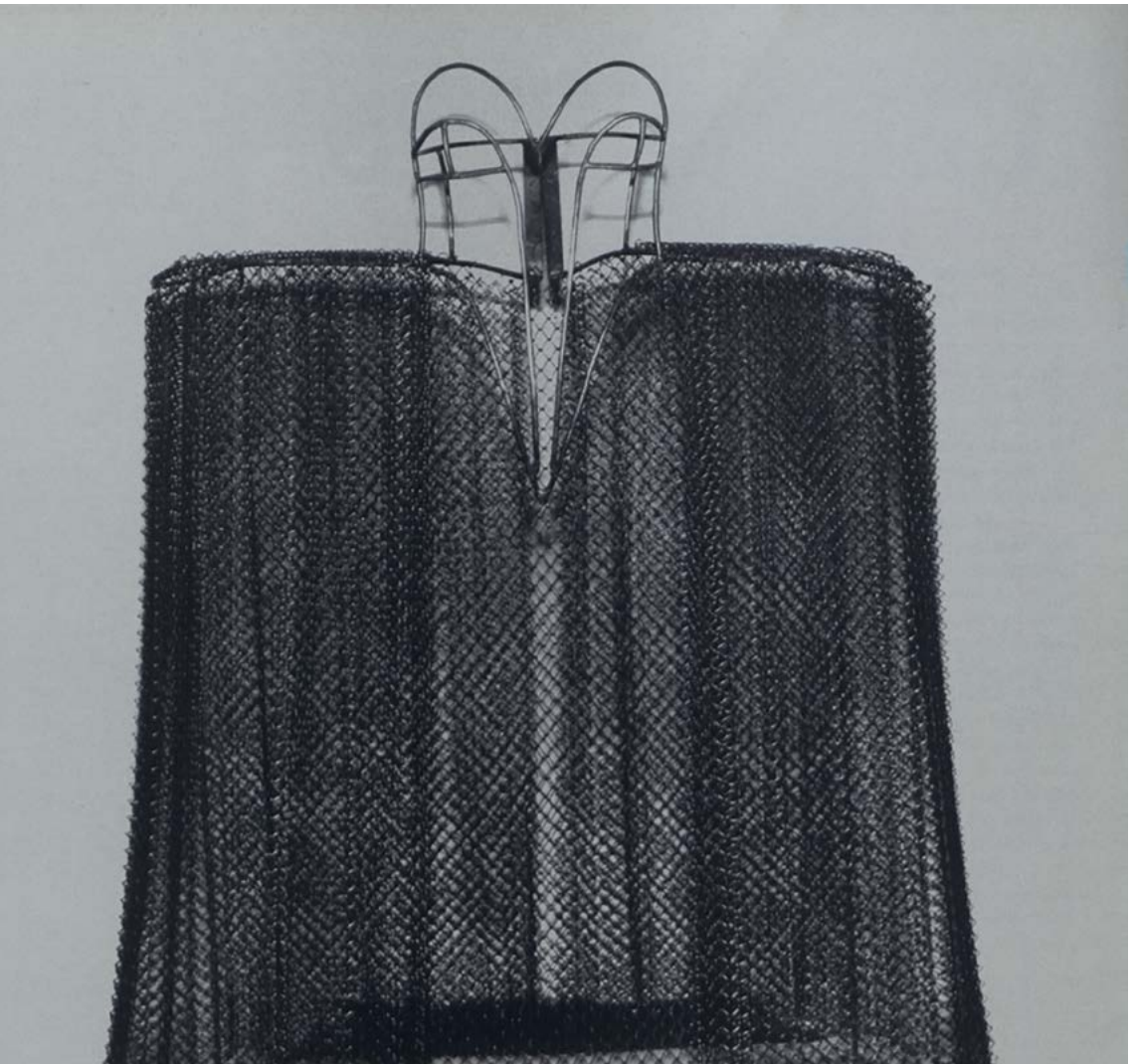
7 Iakovlenko, Kateryna. "'Telo' Parizhskoy Kommuny. Chast pervaya" [The "Body" in the Art of Paryzkoii Komuny Street Group. Part One] // *KORYDOR* [Electronic source]. – March 7, 2017.– Retrieved from: http://www.korydor.in.ua/en/context/telo-parizhskoj-kommuny-part-one.html [In Russian]

Hleba, Halyna. "Oksana Chepelyk: Ya rozpochala feministychnu abo gendernu temu zadovho do..." [Oksana Chepelyk: I Started Working on the Feminist or Gender Theme Long Before...] // *KORYDOR* [Electronic source]. – December 11, 2018.– Retrieved from: http://www.korydor.in.ua/ua/woman-in-culture/oksana-chepelik-feminizm-gender.html [In Ukrainian]

8 More details on Iryna Nirod's work for theater are available here: Bichuia, Nina. "Iryna Nirod. Kreidiane kolo doli" [Iryna Nirod. The Chalk Circle of Destiny] // *PROSTSENIUM*. – 2006. – No. 2-3 (15-16). – P. 66-74. – Retrieved from: http://old.kultart.lnu.edu.ua/Proscaenium/prostsenium%20new/%D0%92%D0%B8%D0%BF%D1%83%D1%81%D0%BA%202-3(15-16)2006/Nirod.pdf [In Ukrainian]

Rezun-Zvezdochetova's installation *Those Wounded in the Heart* (1990–1991) that used a theatrical wing flatwas displayed at international exhibitions in Venice and Berlin.

Iryna Lastovkina. Madame Butterfly (Untitled). 1995.
Metal object. Page from The Two Sides catalog



they appear in particular in the oeuvre of artists who were only indirectly connected to the artistic establishment of the time. This group included Yana Bystrova, Tetiana Hershuni, Vesela Naidenova, Viktoria Parkhomenko, Maryna Skugarieva, Valeria Troubina, and Oksana Chepelyk, among others.[9]

THE NEW WOMAN'S METAL DRESS

Along with a socio-economic collapse, the 1990s were marked by the emergence of a new mass culture, which relied on media clichés and was characterized by an increased interest in fashion, popular Western culture, and sex. Kyiv-based artist Oksana Chepelyk was among creators who methodically studied gender issues and the role and status of women in the post-Soviet society. Her installation-performance *The Birth of Venus* (1995) was both embedded in the then fashion industry and criticized it.[10] In the work, half-naked model performers strolled down the catwalk with shell-like polyethylene inflatable structures behind their backs: the artist alluded to the classic Venus story in this spectacular fashion.[11] According to Chepelyk, this approach communicated a social tendency of those years when a woman worked hard to pretend to be a fragile and an unburdened "goddess," and the shell behind her back embodied the "home," which she "carried on her back" without noticing it, when she performed the ostensibly natural and almost imperceptible female role in society.

With the onset of the 1990s, the economic crisis and new market conditions permitted an avalanche of cheap and substandard goods in the Ukrainian market. Along with flashy textiles, the demand for second-hand culture had risen greatly. Clothing came to Ukraine as humanitarian aid from abroad (popularly known as *humanitarka*) but entered the retail network and became the base for a kind of private business.[12]

Fashion had quickly become one of the instruments of body objectification in society, a cover that imposed on the woman the category of sexuality as an indicator of attractiveness in the man's eyes.[13] Almost simultaneously, Oksana Chepelyk and Iryna Lastovkina created similar works of art, featuring framed women's dresses made of metal, which could be seen as a uniform, or a kind of social cage in which the woman existed.[14] Created for "The Mouth of Medusa" exhibition (1995), focused on the inability of women to find creative fulfillment, the work of Lastovkina elevated women's ambitions as a dream about a dress. Over time, this work has become a visualization of ephemeral disorientation which characterized the system of values of that time, although the artist juxtaposed women's fragility with a metal rigid frame in this work.[15] *Madame Butterfly*

9 Zvizhynsky, Anatolii. "Fantaziii ta demony Vesely Naidenovoii" [Fantasies and Demons of Vesela Naidenova] // *ZBRUC* [Electronic source]. – June 18, 2013.– Retrieved from: https://zbruc.eu/node/8960 [In Ukrainian]

10 *The Birth of Venus* performance is part of Oksana Chepelyk's early performance cycle *Mysteries of Moving Objects*, united by the theme of discovering the woman's place in the post-Soviet society.

11 The artist turned for inspiration to Sandro Botticelli's work *The Birth of Venus* (1484–1486), illustrating the ancient Greek myth about the birth of the goddess Venus (Aphrodite in Greek) from sea foam.

12 More details are available here: Platonova, Anastasiia. "Odezhda umirayet posledney: Zoya Zvinyatskovskaya o chetverti veka ukrainskoy mody" [Clothing Is the Last To Die: Zoya Zvinyatskovskaya on a Quarter of a Century of Ukrainian fashion] // *PLATFOR.MA* [Electronic source]. – July 13, 2017.– Retrieved from: https://platfor.ma/magazine/text-sq/projects/in-progress-moda/ [In Russian]

13 Hleba, Halyna. "Oksana Chepelyk: Ya rozpochala feministychnu abo gendernu temu zadovho do..." [Oksana Chepelyk: I Started Working on the Feminist or Gender Theme Long Before...] // *KORYDOR* [Electronic source]. – December 11, 2018.– Retrieved from: http://www.korydor.in.ua/ua/woman-in-culture/oksana-chepelik-feminizm-gender.html [In Ukrainian]

14 Iryna Lastovkina, *Madame Butterfly* installation (1995); Oksana Chepelyk, installation-performance *Clothing as a Hiding Place* (1996) from the cycle Mysteries of Moving Objects.

15 Iakovlenko, Kateryna. "Irina Lastovkina: Kogda my uvideli ukrainskuyu zhivopis, u nas vsyo perevernulos s nog na golovu" [Iryna Lastovkina: When We Saw Ukrainian Painting, Everything Turned Upside Down Inside Us] // *KORYDOR* [Electronic source]. – December 14, 2018. –

became Lastovkina's last work in the contemporary art field. The artist's sudden exit from experimental art was in no way caused by criticism or rejection of this work, as Lastovkina, on the contrary, received approving reviews from the artistic community. However, the creator opted for a stable income as an educator and restorer, which allowed her to contribute to the family budget and to support her artist husband in his subsequent practice of art.[16]

In Lastovkina's story, we can discern the overall trend of that period, which concerned not only the creators mentioned in this article but also those who never returned to their practice of art. Catastrophic economic circumstances shaped a new type of woman who single-handedly assumed the responsibility for providing for the financial well-being of her family, often neglecting her own self-realization, and, at the same time, combining stereotyped male and female social roles.[17] Such post-Soviet reality, which became a distorting mirror of the ideas of equality and gender balance, was highlighted by Kharkiv photographer Serhii Solonsky in a series of photos entitled *Boudoir* (1995) , which depicts nude young women having both male and female genitalia.[18] The modern viewer may mistakenly associate the *Boudoir* imagery with the ideas of transgenderness, which had not yet been manifested in the post-Soviet space. In addition, the global feminist practice of the time actively instrumentalized the image of a phallus to denote masculinity and used it as a symbol of the patriarchal tradition. For example, a programmatic feminist work by the American artist Lynda Benglis's showed the artist as a nude short-haired woman posing with a double dildo butting against her pubis. This photograph was featured as an advertisement in the November 1974 issue of *Artforum*. Solonsky's idea for *Boudoir* was to position it as a sneak peek into the emergence of a symbolically and socially new kind of human, a woman who, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and throughout the capitalist 1990s, proved to be more adaptive and motivated to survive than men.[19] Benglis and Solonsky used a shared conceptual apparatus for the artistic field, constructing an imaginary body in similar ways, but the context and the underlying idea significantly differentiated their works.

In contrast to Solonsky's *Boudoir,* Tetiana Hershuni, the artist from Kyiv, portrayed a naked and faceless male body. In the picturesque diptych *A Tribute to Pasolini* (1992), Hershuni (currently known as Taia Galagan), the central figure is a naked man lying in bed. On one part of the diptych, we see the faceless character reading a book while lying under the covers. On the other, the same naked character is shown leaning on his knee, with his head bowed, legs wide open and his penis shown in minute detail. Meanwhile, in the Soviet painting canon, the bed was an intimate space, and thus not to be revealed. Working with forbidden images was very much in tune with the artist's simultaneous departure from academic painting. Both parts of the diptych are sentimental and sensual in nature. The painter imparts to the man some traits that can usually be seen in the art when creating poetic and objectified female images. Hershuni's character acquired the traits of weakness, tenderness, sentimentality, femininity, and even obedience. Thus, the creator depicted him not at all as men used to see and position themselves. This diptych

Retrieved from: http://www.korydor.in.ua/ua/woman-in-culture/irina-lastovkina-kogda-my-uvideli-ukrainskuju-zhivopis-u-nas-vse-perevernulos-s-nog-na-golovu.html [In Russian]

16 Ibid.

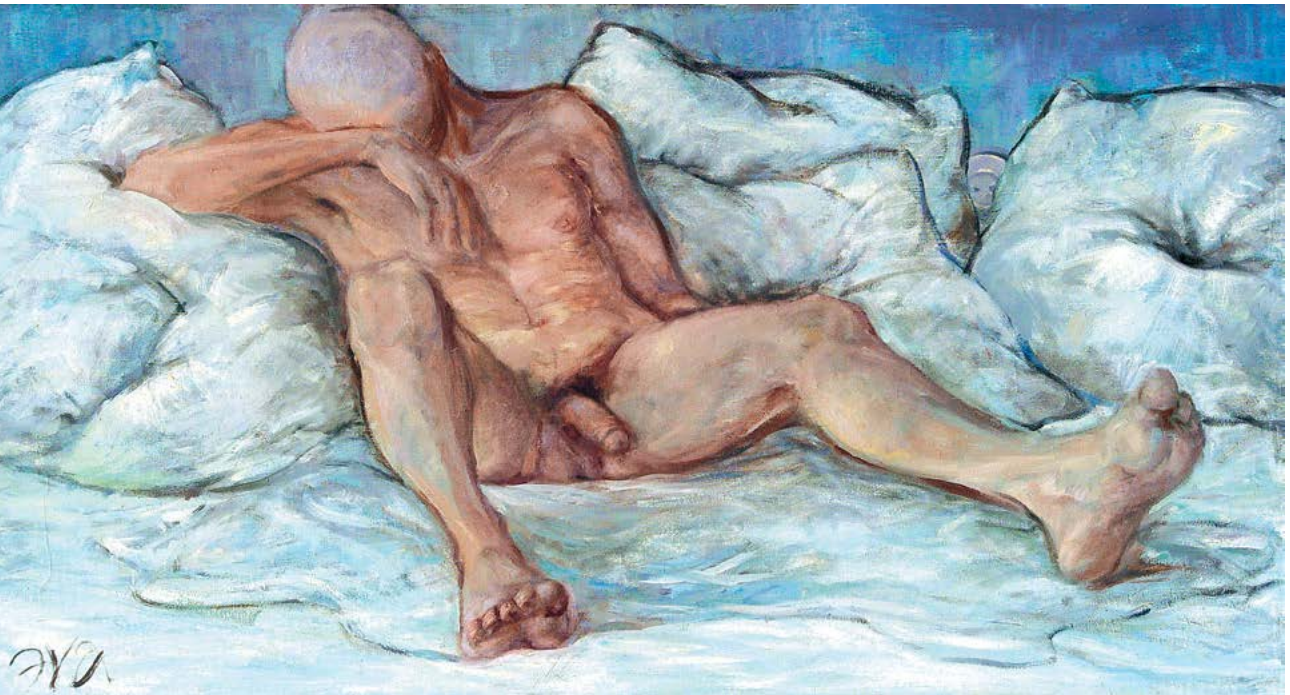
17 This inversion of gender roles in the social system of Ukraine in the 1990s was similar to the premise of the feminist science fiction literary genre, which focuses on an imagined society without gender stereotypes. However, the Ukrainian situation was a deviant manifestation of social roles being swapped.

18 Solonsky's 1995 series *Boudoir* includes about ten photographs created in the technique of analog photomontage.

19 Serhii Solonsky's personal communication to Halyna Hleba.

Serhii Solonsky. From the Boudoir series. 1995. Silver-gelatin print, collage. Photo courtesy of the Kharkiv School of Photography Museum

Tetiana Hershuni. Part of the diptych A Tribute to Pasolini. 1992.
Oil on canvas. Photo courtesy of the Berezhnytsky collection



cannot in any way be construed as an act of aggressive objectification of a man by a woman, or a sitter by an artist. In Hershuni's work, nudity is first and foremost an embodiment of the private as opposed to the public. Misinterpretation of the work by our contemporaries is fleetingly raising a deeper, theoretical, and even ethical research of the present-day re-reading of artworks that make up the corpus of Ukrainian art. Art historian Jürgen Harten rightly noted in his article on the Soviet/post-Soviet transition zone in the article "Eight Stamps in the Passport..." that "the problem is how far we are ready and able, when interpreting certain sign systems, to use such systems' own contexts as our starting point before opting to compare them with each other instead."[20] After all, there is a clear danger that in the process of rethinking the unwritten history of Ukrainian art, we will go beyond the limits set by the idea of the artwork and come to the point of creating misinterpretations and distorting the historiographic data in general.

For example, in her analysis of Ukrainian art, Oksana Briukhovetska makes an attempt to re-read certain works through the feminist lens and sees the first attempts to subvert canonical masculinity in tutu-wearing half-naked sailors, shown in the video *Voices of Love* (1994), filmed by Arsen Savadov and Georhii Senchenko.[21] Such an approach does exist, but new interpretations often conflict with the context of the authors' work and practice. The curator Marta Kuzma interpreted this work as feminist, in her annotation to the exhibition.[22] However, the masculinity in the video is also a representation of the Soviet totalitarian system. Tutus are an allusion to the post-Soviet viewer's perception of the *Swan Lake* ballet as a tool of media silencing in cases of political collapse, and the grotesqueness of the whole show is intended to provoke a sense of the absurdity of the historical moment in general. Therefore, if we go beyond political connotation, this work can hardly be seen as related to feminist themes and gender manifestations in art, even though it displays highly typical formal traits of these topics.

(UN)CONSCIOUS FEMINISM

The feminist paradigm of the 1990s gravitated toward the ideas of Ukrainian modernism. Solomiia Pavlychko saw Ukrainian intellectual thought of the turn of the 19th century, which was already imbued with ideas of equality and emancipation, as the key to interpreting this complex and ambiguous period. Natalia Filonenko, who curated "The Mouth of Medusa" exhibition in 1995, also turned to the memories of the last pre-revolutionary feminist events of 1916 for her concept of the exhibition.[23] It emphasized the seventy-year ideological gap in the continuity of feminist thought and the difference between interpretations of the "pre-revolutionary" and the "independence-era" feminism in Ukraine.[24] Forgotten or hidden Ukrainian feminist thought returned to independent Ukrainian culture not only through the corpus of specialized literature but first of all by means of materializing the image of an emancipated woman.

20 Harten, Jürgen. "Vosem pechatey v pasporte, ili 'Tam chudesa, tam leshiy brodit...'" [Eight Stamps in the Passport or "What Wonders There! There Goblins Scurry..."] // *Sovetskoye iskusstvo okolo 1990 goda* [Soviet Art about 1990]. – P. 8. [In Russian]

21 More details are available here: Schiller, Valeria. "Ekho lyubvi" [The Echo of Love] // *KORYDOR* [Electronic source]. – November 20, 2018. – Retrieved from: http://www.korydor.in.ua/en/context/eho-ljubvi-savadov-senchenko.html [In Russian]

Briukhovetska, Oksana. "Obraz zhertvy i emansypatsiia. Narys pro ukrainsku art-stsenu i feminism" [The Victim Image and Emancipation. An Essay on the Ukrainian Art Scene and Feminism] // *Prostory* [Electronic source]. – March 3, 2017. – Retrieved from: http://prostory.net.ua/en/krytyka/139-obraz-zhertvy-i-emansypatsiia-narys-pro-ukrainsku-art-stsenu-i-feminizm [In Ukrainian]

22 More details are available here: Schiller, Valeria. Ekho lyubvi [The Echo of Love] // *KORYDOR* [Electronic source]. – November 20, 2018. – Retrieved from: http://www.korydor.in.ua/en/context/eho-ljubvi-savadov-senchenko.html [In Russian]

23 Iakovlenko, Kateryna. "'Rot Meduzy': pershi sproby feministychnykh vystavok" ["The Mouth of Medusa": The First Attemps at Feminist Exhibitions] // *KORYDOR* [Electronic source]. – November 9, 2018. – Retrieved from: http://www.korydor.in.ua/en/context/rot-meduzy-pershi-sproby-feministichnyh-vistavok.html [In Ukrainian]

24 These terms denote the period before the October Revolution of 1917 and one that began with Ukraine gaining its independence in 1991.

For an example of this actual situation, we can turn to a fragment of Ilya Chichkan's installation *A Milk Portion for Working in Hazardous Conditions*.[25] A men's jacket depicted the cult figure of Kyiv's art scene in the 1990s, the American art critic and curator Marta Kuzma, who served as director of the Soros Center for Contemporary Art in Kyiv. Chichkan's project dealt with the topic of work in totalitarian societies, and, in particular, with women working as seamstresses. *A Milk Portion for Working in Hazardous Conditions* project consisted of dresses emblazoned with portraits of Mao Zedong and Joseph Stalin. The artist sewed himself women's jackets, as well as two men's jackets, with photo prints portraying the artist Tetiana Hershuni, wearing a headscarf and humbly bent over the sewing machine, and Marta Kuzma. The image of Kuzma was distinctive not only due to its formal traits. The artist himself wore the jacket emblazoned with Kuzma's face, giving the project a performative component, which added a symbolic "look from the margins" to the perception of Kuzma's image. His action became "the creator's metaphor for the assertively-independent image of the American woman as opposed to the Soviet post-traditional oppression of women through labor."[26] Shaped by a society that cultivated the ideas of gender equality and self-realization, Kuzma had at her disposal a qualitatively different conceptual and professional apparatus. It allowed her to almost single-handedly influence and determine the development of the progressive Ukrainian art in Kyiv of the 1990s and to bring the practice of many artists closer to subjects which were akin to those present in the Western context. For example, in the project *A Milk Portion for Working in Hazardous Conditions*, Chichkan did not turn to the problem of cultivating fashion, because he himself was an epigone of fashion and used it as a tool of artistic expression. However, Kuzma's explication of his project positions this work as feminist, thus placing a certain social-critical focus alien to the artists' own thinking at the time.[27]

The importance of Kuzma's study of the Ukrainian feminist discourse goes beyond her outlook, professional beliefs, and her overall biography as an example of an emancipated Ukrainian woman who introduces new ideas from abroad and presents their very embodiment. Kuzma's systematic curatorial and artistic work in the field of the formation of Ukrainian socially critical art and the elaboration of feminist themes in the 1990s is very important. She directly participated in Kyiv's first independence-era feminist exhibitions; in particular, she organized Diane Newmeyer's photography exhibition "The Breasts of the Subway" (1994) and supported the collective exhibition "The Mouth of Medusa" (1995).[28]

Kuzma's equals in their level of professional activity and active social position included Solomiia Pavlychko in literary studies and journalism and Oksana Zabuzhko in literature. Odesa-based Ute Kilter was another prominent figure of the art scene at that time. Acting as a TV presenter, performer, philosopher, actress, and art critic, Kilter is the embodiment of the multidimensional modern individual, having influenced the development of political performance and regional activism and made a name in cinematography and television journalism of the period.

25 A textile jacket with a female photographic portrait on the back was part of Ilya Chichkan's installation *A Milk Portion for Working in Hazardous Conditions*, presented at the 1996 São Paulo Biennale.

26 Kostiantyn Doroshenko's personal communication to Halyna Hleba.

27 Kuzma, Marta. "Textual explication of Ilya Chichkan's project *A Milk Portion for Working in Hazardous Conditions* for the 1996 São Paulo Biennale". – Retrieved from: http://www.23bienal.org.br/paises/ppua.htm?fbclid=IwAR0Blu6nK6vKQZDgdQ_b87lC2X0cEkptSnvdYGwPqzuzxZvoKnBtC1xtsg [In Ukrainian]

28 Iakovlenko, Kateryna. "'Rot Meduzy': pershi sproby feministychnykh vystavok" ["The Mouth of Medusa": The First Attempts at Feminist Exhibitions] // *KORYDOR* [Electronic source]. – November 9, 2018. – Retrieved from: http://www.korydor.in.ua/en/context/rot-meduzy-pershi-sproby-feministichnyh-vistavok.html [In Ukrainian]

The Uta Situation program, produced by her jointly with Viktor Maliarenko for the Odesa TV company ART between 1992 and the early 2000s, not only reported news about Ukrainian art practices and events, but also actively covered the cultural life of European countries.[29] *The Uta Situation* featured an uncommonly authoritative, subjective, and non-trivial outlook of culture. The producers made it as a series of short documentaries serving public informational and educational purposes, which actually amounted to creating a corpus of video art that had its dedicated regional audience for more than a decade. The special character of this TV project, its unique editing practices and storylines make *The Uta Situation* akin to TV and video experimental productions released in the United States during the 1970s and 1980s, including Lisa Bear's *Communications Update* (1979), *Cast Iron TV* (1983), and *Paper Tiger Television* (1981). In addition to TV, Uta Kilter extensively worked with bodily performance practices and was one of only a handful of Ukrainian artists to work with the body as an instrument of artistic expression in the 1990s. Kilter's artistic and TV practice can be defined as a life-long artistic project, similar to ever-changing cultural activism.

BODY INDEPENDENT: OBJECTIFIED OR REVEALED?

The cultural and public perception of body image was influenced by the delayed wave of the sexual revolution that entered the post-Soviet space. Nudity was equated then with the ideas of openness and freedom, and pornography and eroticism were identified with sexual appeal, independence, and radicalism. Riding on this wave, the media market produced a demand for commercial (advertising) photography, which used precisely erotic images.

Photographer Mykola Trokh problematized the issue in his art manifesto as follows: "Many of my colleagues, having smelled money, have rushed into advertising photography. It not only creates a distorted, fictional, and illusory picture of the world but also involves an element of fascism and discrimination directed against those whose shape does not meet the standards of top models. If I am aware of this, I have to create anti-advertising photography, to do my best to truthfully capture reality in its non-heroic, non-flashy manifestations, and portray ordinary people, if you will."[30]

The glossy "Western" model of feminine beauty, copied by Ukrainian advertisers, was strikingly different from the reality of the post-Soviet 1990s. Trokh explores this cultural contrast in his photographic series *Schoolgirls* (1993). The author portrayed aged women dressed in schoolgirl uniforms and with faces hidden by porcelain doll masks. In one of the photos, the character masturbates with her legs spread. The photographer emphasizes this deviant image of schoolgirls also because schoolgirls became an erotic fetish in the late Soviet time and were associated with free sexuality and the rebellion. When seen on adult women, the school uniform created a grotesque association, revealed an attempt to be sexy nymphets from fashionable magazine covers, even though post-Soviet women could not be such nymphets by definition.

29 Briukhovetska, Oksana. "Uta Kilter: 'Ya maiu vadu – fiziolohichno ne mozhu brekhaty'" [Uta Kilter: "I Have a Flaw – I Physiologically Cannot Lie"] // *KORYDOR* [Electronic source]. – March 14, 2018. – Retrieved from: http://www.korydor.in.ua/en/opinions/uta-kil-ter-ya-mayu-vadu-fiziologichno-ne-mozhu-brehati.html [In Ukrainian]

30 Trokh, Mykola. "Chast vtoraya 'Manifest'" [Part Two "Manifesto"] // *NASH* [Electronic source]. – July 19, 2019. – Retrieved from: http://nashizdat.com/blog/photo/25.html [In Russian]

According to art historian Tetiana Zhmurko, Trokh avoided both male and female bodies in his oeuvre. His cross-cutting theme was the naked body in photography, which he interpreted as a collective, public body. And with photographic certainty, he portrayed it as subject to decomposing in the excessively artificial pornographic environment. For Trokh, pornography became an artistic language and a tool of ideological expression.[31]

In contrast to the "male outlook," women artists depicted their own bodies with the help of other formal means of artistic expression. They perceived the body primarily as a collection of human qualities, emotions and personal experiences contained in a certain bodily form. For example, in Yana Bystrova's picturesque *Red Series* (1989–1991), the traumatic story of the artist's separation from her partner was represented through half-naked female bodies. Full-bosomed women with disproportionate body parts visualized the experienced internal fractures. Bystrova painted her female artist friends and almost dissolved them in the totally red background of the painting. With these "therapeutic artworks," the artist turned to universal values and, probably, went beyond the focal limits of feminist or gender themes in art. At the same time, the artist Maryna Skugarieva used the image of a lyrical female body as the old European tradition in art, and complemented painting with handmade embroidery when creating her pictures.[32] The existing clichés on the so-called women's art accumulate in the author's practice: women depict women by using a "feminine material," that is, cloth. However, in the series *Good Housewives* (1997–2010), the artist portrays mostly nude women against the background of messages from women's online forums, which include, along with discussions of domestic violence and psychological conflicts, comments from participants of cooking and fashion forums. The curious and, at the same time, routine perspectives of Skugarieva's characters, of different age and appearance, form a virtual gallery of housewives as a new social group, which became clearly defined in Ukrainian society in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Nudity was not provocative in the art of the 1990s. The excess corporeality in culture became a counter-reaction to decades of Soviet bans and taboos against it. Corporeality became material for research, it acquired the personality and humanity of its own. Artists used nudity as a metaphor for freedom, defenselessness, or a human lacking stereotypes or ideologies. Given the complex political, social, and cultural situation, individuality and private space were the important values acquired in the post-Soviet era. Instead of radical slogans and feminist art manifestos, Ukrainian artists opted for a therapeutic escape. And the ideological struggle focused not on the gender issue, but on the right to individuality, the embodiment of the private and intimate as opposed to the public and official.

Jo Anna Isaak notes that it is not in the slightest the so-called "inner essence" of the woman, but rather her place and role in society that lead to the identification of the feminine with the reactionary.[33] The same tendency was observed by Solomiia Pavlychko, who emphasized that the painful adaptation of feminist ideas in independent Ukraine was caused by the aggressive and reactionary Western feminist movement of the 1970s. With this feminism, Ukrainian populists "intimidated" the electorate in order to preserve the familiar and comfortable image

31 Zhmurko, Tetiana. "Mutiruyushchiye 90-ye Nikolaya Trokha" [Mykola Trokh's Mutating 1990s] // *Bird in Flight* [Electronic source].– November 1, 2018. – Retrieved from: https://birdinflight.com/pochemu_eto_shedevr/20181101-nick-troh.html [In Russian]

32 Martyniuk, Olena. *Solovei i troianda* [A Nightingale and a Rose] (A catalog of artist Maryna Skugarieva's works) // Art-Agent, 2009. – P. 6. [In Ukrainian]

33 Isaak, Jo Anna. "The Revolutionary Power of Women's Laughter" // *Feminism and Contemporary Art: The Revolutionary Power of Women's Laughter*. – London, New York: Routledge, 1996. – P. 11-46.

Maryna Skugarieva. A Young Lad. 1991.
Oil on canvas. Photo courtesy of the artist

of womanhood.[34] Pavlychko described in detail the problem of forgetting one's own cultural context due to the interpretations of feminism which were ideologically distorted in the Soviet era and misleading in the 1990s. This was the actual reason for the rejection, or rather, the banal ignorance of their own historical past by Ukrainian women, even though that past involved far deeper roots of feminism in Ukraine than it may seem today. In the absence of sound theoretical knowledge on the issue among the general population, it was precisely professional opinion, authoritative criticism, and personal examples set by cultural activists that shaped the artistic and social manifestations of feminist art in Ukraine in the 1990s. In agreement with philosopher Tamara Zlobina's statement of the need to re-read Ukrainian art, researcher Oksana Briukhovetska adds that such a problem is not exclusive to Ukraine and offers an example from the Polish art scene: "It was feminist art criticism that helped some of them [Polish women artists] to realize the feminist nature of their own works. This phenomenon can be called unconscious or intuitive feminism, which can then be re-articulated into a conscious one."[35]

34 Pavlychko, Solomiia. "Does Ukrainian Literary Studies Need a Feminist School?" / *Feminizm* [Feminism] (A collection of articles, ed. by Vira Ageyeva). – Kyiv: Vydavnytstvo Solomiii Pavlychko "Osnovy," 2002. – P. 21. [In Ukrainian]

35 Briukhovetska, Oksana. "Obraz zhertvy i emansypatsiia. Narys pro ukrainsky art-stsenu i feminism" [The Victim Image and Emancipation.

Yana Bystrova. Only the Healthy Will Survive. 1990.
From The Red Series. Oil on canvas. Photo courtesy
of the artist

The most important problem for us now is not the lack of bright and iconic women artists in the 1990s, because they were obviously there, but rather the scattered nature of information about the 1990s, the lack of public archives and a museum of contemporary art in Ukraine. It is important to reconsider the practice of the creators active in that period, to take into account prevalent socio-political conditions in order to broaden the context and to properly outline the emergence of certain ideas in the Ukrainian society.
We have no intention whatsoever to limit the list of artists of the 1990s to those represented in this text. We merely outline the topics most often manifested in artistic practices at that time and set a vector for the study of Ukrainian art through feminist optics.

Art historian Nadiia Pryhodych identified video *Bloody Mary*, filmed in 1999 by Natalia Holiborda, Ivan Tsiupka, and Solomiia Savchuk, as a "feminist paraphrase of the Hong Kong action film."[36] A rooftop shoot-out involving three women is played out in front of the viewer. Between the shots, the characters discuss chicken cooking techniques, intimate details of their private lives, and everyday events. This work may be appropriately seen not only as an imitation of a crime film, which was popular in the 1990s but also as an expression of hidden misogyny. However, it is equally important to interpret this image from the psychoanalytic perspective, where all three heroines are treated as embodiments of the same woman. In addition to the social conflict of self-identification in the 1990s, the filmmakers revealed the psychological drama of a woman at the dawn of the 21st century, which came as a result of the gender confusion marking the end of the 20th century.

An Essay on the Ukrainian Art Scene and Feminism] // *Prostory* [Electronic source]. – March 3, 2017. – Retrieved from: http://prostory.net.ua/en/krytyka/139-obraz-zhertvy-i-emansypatsiia-narys-pro-ukrainsku-art-stsenu-i-feminizm [In Ukrainian]

36 Pryhodych, Nadiia. "Svoyo kino" [Cinema of Our Own] // *Khudozhestvenny zhurnal*. – 2001. – No. 30-31. - 2001. – Retrieved from: http://moscowartmagazine.com/issue/80/article/1758?fbclid=IwAR1fp1WqckKHbrgDXOe9nHhAHZ0vk6JocYFCaq0u40D4wwm5KeJustrnk8w [In Russian]

“The Phantom of Liberty” One’s own, mine, someone else’s, common, free[1]

VLADA RALKO

Kyiv — Kaniv, June-September 2018

“I call to the mysterious one who yet
Shall walk the wet sands by the edge of the stream
And look most like me, being indeed my double”
William Butler Yeats

1 The text was first published in: Ralko, Vlada. *Pryvyd Svobody* [The Phantom of Liberty]. – Kyiv – Kaniv: 2018

Vlada Ralko walking by the studios of the Union of Artists of Ukraine. Photo by Anna Voitenko. Photo courtesy of Vlada Ralko

Vlada Ralko. A Room. 2018. From The Phantom of Liberty series. Oil on canvas. Photo courtesy of the artist

The title is borrowed from Luis Buñuel, who, in his turn, rephrased Karl Marx with his specter haunting Europe. However, for me, this expression is extremely accurate in characterizing the process of substitution: the recognition of certain things as one's own is replaced by the desire to appropriate them. We make a terrible mess when trying to understand who freedom, goodwill, destiny, and even one's own body belong to and whether anyone can own them at all. On the one hand, I want to focus on waste lots that appeared in places that were previously state-owned and intended for public use. These cavities now look like no man's lands-buildings-spaces, but they actually do belong to someone. Uncompleted buildings without windows, wastelands, fields overgrown with thistles, abandoned houses or stores, defunct houses of culture, and so on — what used to be public access areas, have turned into an unending landgrab area, into a kind of negative dangerous space where invisible Landlords lie in wait for an accidental invader. On the other hand, I keep observing how the corporeal is oppressed by the redistribution of the system's resources, and how the same Soviet standards get reenacted in manifestations of the corporeal instead of the human, how the body is again enclosed by the same rule.

Pascal Gielen applied the term "enclosure" to situations that involve purposeful and systematic privatization of the formerly public space. In the last few decades, public access areas became covered with a grid of walls or fences, which transform the formerly singular space into separate "plots". The number of these plots is equal to the ever-growing number of owners. But was the Soviet-era access to public spaces really about freedom?
At that time, the state forcibly set up and designated public places in a uniform way, using rigid standards in designing and decorating such spaces. The "empire" multiplied almost identical spaces. The common space devoured the private space through the introduction of a uniform standard. Therefore, open public-access areas were spaces of sophisticated imprisonment under the unremitting surveillance of the system.

In both cases, of the idea of the common space being distorted, I find a surprisingly uniform process at work, a process of colonizing the individual (it should be noted that, in the case of "enclosure," the private domain does not equal the individual at all).
The indivisible nature of the individual faces the danger of being divided and tamed, for it is the otherness, as long as the individual recognizes it as their own, that determines their membership in the united humanity. Therefore, both the "old" and "new" trends imply coercive surveillance of the free space. It does not matter whether it is public-access areas with rules forcibly imposed by the system or ghettoes of "elite housing" — in both cases, social existence is regulated by external forces. The mass of individual statistical "population units," based on the principle of normalized uniformity, denies the living "agonism" of the community with its complex, contradictory, and conflict-prone structure. These external forces try to squeeze freedom into some sort of a "grip vice," to delimit it ideologically, or to privatize it.

Due to the overly burdensome and painfully familiar experience of refusal and prohibition, we are accustomed to finding some vivifying motive and impulse in the constraints, so when we suddenly face freedom, we feel extremely confused. The spontaneous manifestations of humanity are usually doomed to be tugged back and forth between two options instead of choosing the third, the tenth, or any other one. When we get confused in the search for an appropriate norm, we rely on the analogy principle which is even more disorientating. The artificial subordination to a certain norm has narrowed our understanding of normality so much that the normal human nature is beginning to appear as ugly, harmful, insane, or heroic.

While working on the series, I identified something like a threshold of human nature, that is, the special conditions under which we can see it. It is as if something happens during a person's performance of certain solemn or, to the contrary, necessary and repetitive daily actions, something imbuing these activities with a separate meaning. Such embedding of meaning within an action can be mechanic or conscious when the person either imagines overcoming the immanence of the utilitarian routine or is actually overcoming it. In my opinion, human nature in these cases only appears to exist or, conversely, comes into the spotlight when revealed.

It is beyond dispute that I considered the issue at hand through the peculiarities and status of the feminine, which, however, I did not single out, but rather noted as an important marker of the human condition in general. The feminine, namely its peculiar corporeality, society-imposed objectification, subordination, and immanence, sometimes seem to me to be precise metaphors of the marginal position of human beings when they dare to "accept the offer" of the system.

The series consists of two parts in which the theme is explored from different perspectives. In the first cycle of artworks, I first depicted the actually existing interiors of a mothballed empty building at an abandoned Kaniv tourist campsite. (I worked on the project in this building). Then, given the conditions and limitations set by the available images of rooms, stairs, and corridors, I added something that either could be human, or once was such, or just looked like that. For the second cycle, which includes four works, I used my own long-term observations of Kaniv weddings, which turned into generalized images of ritual festivities. The attributes of modern wedding celebrations brought to my mind classic depictions of ceremonial Roman processions or Bacchanal scenes. Human nature is thus tested under the constraints and prohibitions of the System or the Custom. In both parts of the project, I indicated the act of a sacrifice, as I compared the wasteful spending of the wedding potlatch with the daily violence of the system when the human nature itself is victimized.

Superficial appearances of the human nature which I look out for in my works can take many forms under the repressive conditions of the norm. For example, the descriptions of the sexuality of Saint Teresa or Saint Catherine with her imaginary engagement ring made of the circumcised foreskin of Christ, provided by Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex,* are manifested through extreme religious exaltation, which, in its turn, has nothing to do with sublimation. I would prefer to avoid a uniform interpretation of certain figures in this series. Individual objects can appear as something similar to the corporeal (which is also human, as long as we speak of manifestations) which has taken on a certain form, or as a metaphor for the human because they have free form as opposed to the strict certainty of the environment. It is extremely important for me to pay close attention to the distinction between similarity and uniformity, as the former implies difference, while the latter serves the norm.

In almost all these works, I used the elements of typical Soviet interior decoration with the characteristic division of the walls into the upper white portion and the lower one. These panels were usually painted with some subduing dirty color with oil paint. I also included "palace-like" decoration of cramped rooms, when, for example, the imitation painting of the stairs themselves played the role of absent carpets on the stairs. While working on these works, I noticed the similarity between the upper edge of typical wall panels and the horizon line. This painted horizon became both a threatening sign and a metaphor for the system in my eyes. I compared the understanding of the norm in Soviet

construction practices with the present symbolic embodiment of the norm in the parameters of a car (it replaced the Roman festive chariot in the weddings that inspired my works). A jeep, which was decorated for a wedding, suddenly became similar to a hearse, which is also a certain unit of the norm, as it is commensurate with the parameters of the human body. In this way, the desire to normalize the human nature (body, actions, and relationships) has the opposite effect: the human nature suffers in Soviet rooms, where space is calculated to meet the minimum human needs only, and a holiday car reminds one of death due to it being adapted to human size.

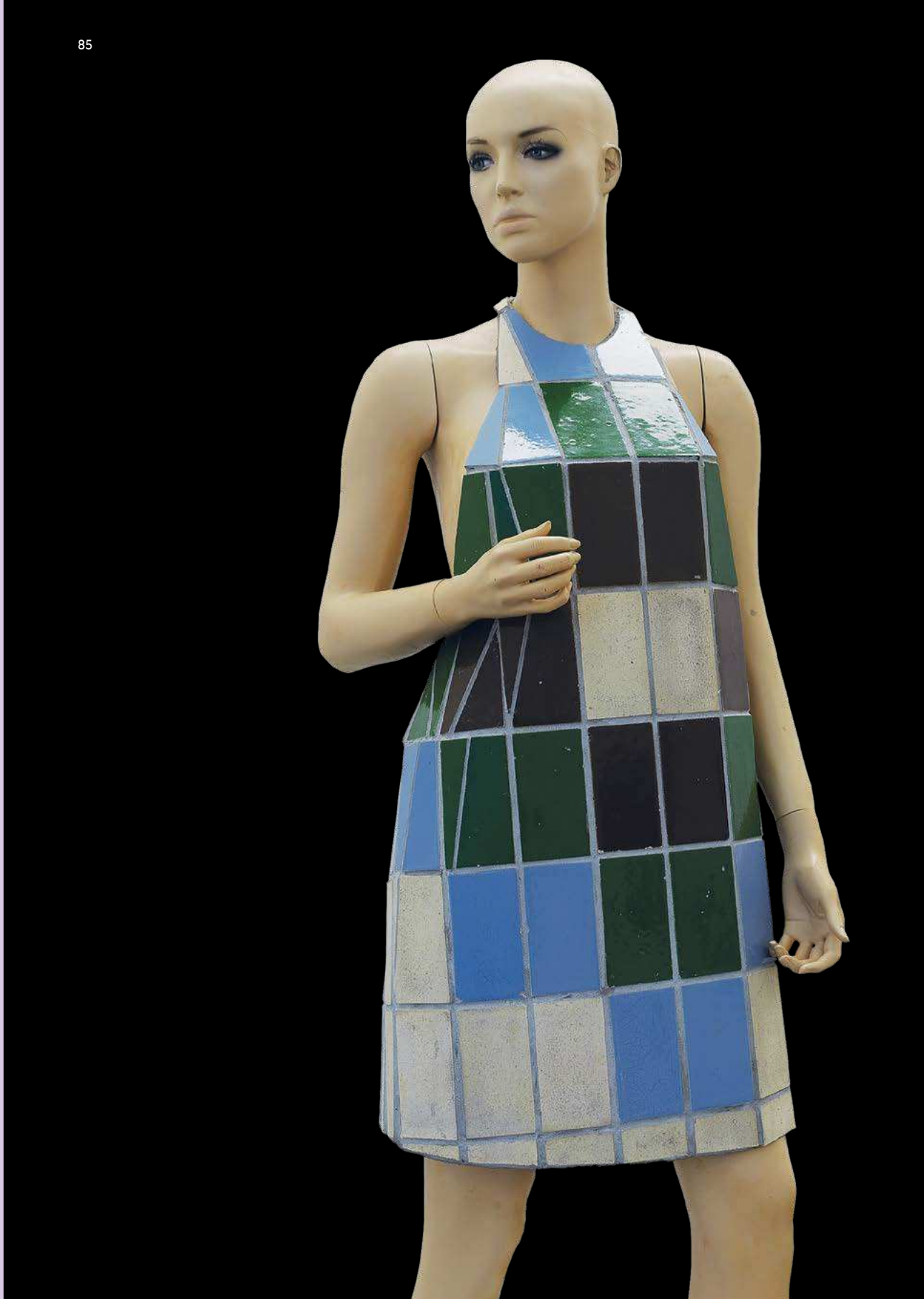
In all the works of the series, my intention was to create a stifling atmosphere produced by the absence of exit where it is usually sought, as there is neither a door nor a true horizon there. One can achieve freedom only through human nature, only where it is and where we are able to recognize it.

Vlada Ralko. A Wall. 2018. From The Phantom of Liberty series. Oil on canvas. Photo courtesy of the artist

Five Female Ukrainian Artists in the Contemporary Art of the 21st Century: Kseniia Hnylytska, Anna Zvyagintseva, Zhanna Kadyrova, Lada Nakonechna, Lesia Khomenko

OLENA HODENKO

There is a certain two-dimensionality inherent in the theme of women in art, as it involves both a woman as a maker of culture and a woman as an object to be displayed in works of art. Having chosen the first aspect for this study, we will focus on five young artists who entered the art scene at the beginning of the 21st century — Kseniia Hnylytska, Anna Zvyagintseva, Zhanna Kadyrova, Lada Nakonechna, and Lesia Khomenko — and will outline their creative orientations, their place in Ukraine's socio-cultural space, their activities in the field of art education, and the problems posed by the meanings and forms of their artistic practices.



Zhanna Kadyrova. Part of the Second Hand. Darnytskyi Silk Mill project, displayed at the "A Space of One's Own" exhibition, held at the PinchukArtCentre Research Platform. 2018. Photo by Maksym Bilousov

These artists all belong to the same, emblematic, generation of contemporary Ukrainian art. All of them have repeatedly participated (both jointly and individually) in Ukrainian and international exhibitions, all have been nominated for various prestigious awards, and won a few. All are members of the Khudrada curatorial group, and four of them (except Zvyagintseva) are members of the R.E.P. artistic group.[1] The art of this generation was formed in the mid-2000s and became a reaction to social stimuli, in particular, the Orange Revolution. Today, each artist is a remarkable creative personality who has her own "intonation" and relies on her own artistic strategy. Painting is among the priorities set by Hnylytska and Khomenko, while Kadyrova focuses on sculpture and installations, and Nakonechna and Zvyagintseva frequently turn to drawing techniques. However, all of them, ascribe to "project thinking," as they use a variety of techniques and tools — objects, photos, videos, collages, and performance practices.
The form of expression and artistic language are of great importance to them. The artists' positions are similar, and this stems from their close contacts, shared views, and the focus on social-critical thinking in their oeuvre.

One of such shared themes is the theme of memory. Khomenko was possibly the first Ukrainian artist to explore the past and the deformations in the perception of Ukrainian history. She reinterpreted the Soviet legacy as an inevitable load of artistic traditions, as a broken line in the development of world art, and as a layer of mythological history. We can observe how she exposes surviving symptoms of the past in her early series (*Giants*, 2006, *Ogres*, 2008, *An Eyewitness*, 2009).
Hnylytska reveals the indifferent public attitude to the destruction of heritage in *Stratigraphy* (2016) — a series of watercolor sketches of Kyiv's abandoned monuments which involved the creation of a journalistic research platform. Zvyagintseva focused on this topic in her series *Overlay. Bazaar* (2011), which dealt with the landscapes of urban "empty zones". The theme of destruction in eastern Ukraine was reflected by Kadyrova in the *Experiments* project (2014), which constructed imaginary situations of explosions over peaceful Kyiv, and by Nakonechna in *Merge Visible* (2015), where Suprematist compositions, ostensibly made of "surviving debris," were painted on developing papers, referencing the utopia offered by avant-garde ideas of the bright future.

Another example is Kadyrova's project *Recanonization* (2017), which focuses on the conversion of ideological clichés in the post-Soviet society: via a "hooligan" intervention into public space, which used old cultural forms to construct a new expression (the "heroes" of the Soviet monumental propaganda had golden halos added to their heads). The artist shifted the emphasis to thinking about changing attributes without changing the internal essence.

The civic position of these women artists often finds expression through direct responses to revolutionary events. However, they avoid purely illustrative approach; their explorations of the situation in Ukraine (the occupation of Crimea and the Russian invasion) are critical reflections expressed in art forms. Thus, Kadyrova created an image of a "crippled" Ukraine in her work *Untitled* (2014), where a fragment of the scorched wall reproduces the map of Ukraine with Crimea cut off from it. Nakonechna's performance *Hail* (2015-2017), located in public space (with passers-by placed on the gallery's display as "targets"), played with the ambiguity of the title: hail as a natural phenomenon and the Grad (which means "hail" in Russian, but is also the name of a rocket system) as a destructive weapon. Hnylytska's picturesque series *The Inertia of Expectation* (2011) created an atmosphere of time "on hold," as the expectation and hope for changes that were present in the period between the two Maidans. Zvyagintseva's project *Radio behind the Wall* (2015) showed a room where the fear of

1 *R.E.P. Revolutsiiny eksperymentalny prostir* [R.E.P. A Revolutionary Experimental Space]. – Berlin: The Green Box Kunst Editionen, 2015. [In Ukrainian]

Kseniia Hnylytska.
From the series Land Answer. 2017.
Postcard design

Iryna Miroshnikova standing near Anna Zvyiagintseva's work Draw One's Window, Crumple Paper. 2015.
Photo by Oleksandr Burlaka.
Photo courtesy of Anna Zvyagintseva

the unknown is born, and Khomenko acted as a witness of events, showing copies of portraits taken at the Maidan.

Although the artists do not consider their art as feminist, nevertheless, some of their works do respond to gender issues. These include Khomenko's performance *Dress as Tablecloth* (2015), where the creator herself acted as a part of the set table, and Hnylytska's works: calendar *While Lords Revel, Serfs Water Earth with Blood...*(2015), posters telling the story of Ukrainian women labor migrants in Poland (2018), and the series *How I Want To Be Geisha* (2018) with "Internet images" of women made in both Western and Oriental traditions. Significantly, the artists often use a new gender methodology in interpreting the history and the present, looking at official history through subjective "small-scale" stories of ordinary people. In the series *Stepan Repin* (2011), Khomenko uses her grandfather's memories to shape an alternative perception of war through the eyes of the ordinary soldier, and family stories are featured in Nakonechna's video installation *Others' History* (2009). Such alternative versions destroy historical myths and stereotypes of the dominant ideology. Sometimes private stories, stemming from the life of the artist's father, also an artist, become the basis for artistic generalizations (*Double Play* by Hnylytska, 2012; *Sculptures of My Father* by Zvyagintseva, 2013).

Many of the artists' works offer artistic criticism of the concepts of work, migration, the cost of labor, borders, and their transgression. Zvyagintseva's *Fragment* project (2013) deals with new meanings as with routine women's work. The viewer's attention shifts from sketch drawings to a monumental metal installation, which is an enlarged fragment of a drawing of a pair of hands washing dishes (when viewed from the side, it turns into a line). The gigantic size reinforces the importance of the ordinary and the unnoticed. Metal structures can "crumble" and remain only as memories (*How Things Are*, 2015). A work of art can be just as invisible, involving not only the result but also the long (invisible) thought process. Kadyrova's tile sculpture *Plumber Tolia* (2004-2005) and the frame-squeezed workers in Khomenko's series *Congenial Work* (2011) are based on reflections about work as a means of spiritual existence and as a way to earn money. The theme is continued in Kadyrova's project *Market* (since 2017), created with a spectacular and economic context each time specifically for a given space. This is an example of the artist working not only with the volume but also with the specifics of the local area where the event-linked performance is unfolding ("tiled goods" get sold for the currency of the country where the event is localized). Meanwhile, Nakonechna (*Postcards*, 2010) offered for sale for the local currency uniform graphic sheets created in one working day, but with a different price depending on the country of production. Both artists desacralize the creative work as they use the method of practical testing to outline an array of global market issues, offshore outsourcing, and speculative pricing mechanisms. Some of Khomenko's works (*The Creator's Repeat Performance* and *Tools*, both 2016) explore similar themes as they deal with the creation of new value in copying one's own works, the creator's voluntarism, and the functions of art.

In the continuation of the critical thinking line, some artists strive to implement their own pedagogical programs; for example, Nakonechna co-founded (with art scholar Kateryna Badianova) "A Course in Art", which has been active since 2013 as an educational program of the Method Fund, while Khomenko has been teaching a contemporary art course at the Kyiv Academy of Media Art (KAMA) since 2015. For them, teaching is an important task, because it is also a kind of creative laboratory. The educational direction was reflected, in particular, in the series of "interventions" in the space of the National Art Museum of Ukraine which took place within the framework of the Method Fund's research program *Socialist Realism. Appearing as Something Else*, which involved implementation of Nakonechna's project *Teacher* (2017) and Khomenko's project *Countdown*.[2] Active since 2012, *Countdown* is an attempt to "deconstruct one's own experience of figurative painting through the transformation of Socialist Realist paintings into an abstract image." When reformatting Viktor Puzyrkov's painting *Black Sea Sailors* along the lines of abstract reduction, Khomenko, in fact, focused on the issue of transparency or openness in artistic language. We would like to add that the creative oeuvre of all artists who are discussed here is to a great extent influenced by the discourse of contradictions between the old pedagogical system and the new artistic practices.

Kseniia Hnylytska has displayed good citizenship both in art and in life, having participated in art events held in public space (she painted shell boxes for a charity auction, produced "environmentalist postcards," and took part in an art event in support of Oleg Sentsov). In the words of the artist, she is concerned about the idea of democratic interaction between people of different spheres. In a number of works, there is a political subtext. On the eve of president Viktor Yanukovych's escape from the country, she created the poster *The President's Vita* (2013), which is a pseudo-icon with the critically-ironic content, where marginal scenes depict notable events in the life of the national leader. The poster was followed by the series of paintings

2 See: *Sotsialistychny realism. Zdavatysia inshym* [Socialist Realism. Appearing as Something Else]. Issue 2 (Ed. by K. Badianova, L. Nakonechna, D. Pankratov).. – Kyiv: ADEF, 2017. [In Ukrainian]

Anna Zvyagintseva. Fragment of the Inappropriate Touches installation. 2017.
Photo by Maksym Bilousov

Lada Nakonechna. Fragment of the “Background Mode” exhibition.
Galerie EIGEN + ART, Leipzig. 2018. Photo by Uwe Walter. Photo
courtesy of Lada Nakonechna and Galerie EIGEN + ART Leipzig/Berlin

Kseniia Hnylytska. Challenging Vitalii Klitschko to a Duel! 2018.
Still from a video. Photo courtesy of the artist

Behind the Fence (2013) and the poster *The Man Who Sold the World* (2017), made in the style of a medieval parable of the ruler and the people. In the paintings *A Girl* and *A Young Man* (both 2010), the artist switched to explicit satire. Therefore, it seems only logical to see the artist herself starring in five videos about Ukraine's rescuer, Kseniia Kyivska (filmed starting in 2016, in collaboration with Alina Yakubenko). These are ironic hoaxes in the folk-chapbook style with elements of parody that offer a mix of carnival laughter and political invectives.

In general, many of her images feature a playful intonation. She implants her quirky creatures, such as surrogate centaurs (Power, 2006) and clumsy snowmen (*A Sketch from the Life of Snowmen,* 2005), into modern life. In a world of down-to-earth desires and mixed-up culture, the artist's fantasy shapes contemporary mythology (as a compensation for the loss of earlier myths). She is fascinated by the fantastic world of nature with its plants, animals, microorganisms (the series *Different Cultures,* 2010), and waxes nostalgic for the lost integrity of the environment. That is why her art is imbued with slight sadness and irony, a sense of lack of attraction and harmony. Hnylytska's series of abstract works (patchwork *Carambole,* 2007 and striped *Colortest,* 2012), in which the canvas is totally filled as if it were "phytowallpaper," should create, according to the artist, an ideal space. The dream of the ideal is also programmed in large meditative garden landscape paintings that depict magnificent fantasy nature (*Open Air,* 2008).

The Searching for the Roots project (2007) should not be ignored either. The theme of national identity and "homeland" is explored by the artist with her characteristic ironical concreteness. She creates a gallery of images and ceramic objects modeled on root plants, such as beets, potatoes, and celery. The seeming straightforwardness of the approach masks a multi-layered structure of meanings regarding manipulations with the notions of land, indigenous culture, and national identity.

The artist's expressive means include not only her favorite painting, but also numerous quickly-made sketch drawings, performances, videos, and installations. In the *Three Occurrences in One Day* (2012) project, she used the diorama technique, in which painting and installation are organically intertwined. Based on the reproduction of events occurring in human habitats in three countries — Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and the United States — she creates the metaphor of a "modern Babylon" with hybrid mass culture, where unexpected mutations, such as contaminated nature re-growing as garbage, are possible. The viewers find themselves in the "jungle" of modern civilization, where criteria and social bearings have been lost.

Anna Zvyagintseva's principal approach to art can be traced in a number of her works in which she consistently occupies the position of a "professional observer," a scholar of life. The artist's world is tender, fragile, and prone to evading her brushstroke. It exists in the space of close relationships, touches, domestic chores, and social communications of the woman artist. Its main language is a line, a light drawing, or its trace. Its materials are fragile and transient, like paper, fabric that can be crumpled (at least figuratively, as in the metal installation *Draw One's Window, Crumple Pape,* 2016), soft ropes (*A Cage,* 2010), and footprints (*Trails,* 2013). Her art is about the hidden, her monumental installations, according to the artist, are "monuments to hidden action."

Zvyagintseva pays attention to relationships, touches, tactile experience, which can be intimate, maternal and public, and all of them are filled with meanings. The feeling of a fracture or a loss of this fragile world gives rise to a hidden desire to endow it with strength and significance. In this way, soft and light transforms into hard and heavy: a line drawn on paper becomes embroidery on fabric (*Isolated Records,* 2017, which the artist described as a tribute to motherhood, as "a monument to unique routine actions"), a quick sketch becomes a metal monument, and tactility becomes plaster casts situated between parts of the body (*Inappropriate Touches,* 2017). In the project *Found Drawings* (2018), graphite lines drawn on the white floor, as on a white sheet, are perceived as traces of accidental and unconscious reflections. The creator is engrossed in thoughts about important but underappreciated phenomena, about various facets of their perception, about the change of perspective in the assessment of everyday life.

Her recent work, entitled *The Declaration of Intent and Doubt* (2018), offers a kind of a summary of previous ideas. Initially, the idea of the performance was transformed into a three-channel video directed by Kateryna Gornostai: each of the three cameras captures specific objects — a beam of light, the performer who "paints" the floor with a wet rag, and the stage. The action unfolds according to a certain scenario, reflecting the artist's creative thinking development from the idea (the beam as a guiding force), through its execution (the submission of the performer), and towards the emergence of disagreements and creative doubts (protest of the performer, who begins to resist the preordained "trajectory" of the beam and manifest a will of her own). Disobedience and chaos form the culmination of the process and end with the synergy of both components. The details are thought through to the minutest detail, from the dark figure of the creator herself directing the beam to the wet line that leaves a trail. Washing the floor can also be seen as a hint at useful work, but above all, it serves as material —

Zhanna Kadyrova. A Circular Diorama. 01. From the project Calculation. 2008-2009. Tiles, cement, and foam sealant. Photos by Andrii Yakubsky and Oleksii Lerer. Photos courtesy of Zhanna Kadyrova

Zhanna Kadyrova. Surveillance Cameras.
From the project Implicit Forms. Paris, 2015.
Photo documentation. Photo courtesy of the artist

Lesia Khomenko, Zhanna Kadyrova, and Lada Nakonechna at the Malevich Prize Award ceremony. Kyiv, 2012. Photo courtesy of the Polish Institute in Kyiv

a pencil or a brush used to draw on paper. The image emerges as a metaphor for the fragile world of creative reflections, the contradictions between the artist's intent and doubt, as she is both the video's creator and the performer. The artist ascribes to the idea of a smart line, drawing as thinking, and creative activity as daily work and an intricate complex thinking process.

Zhanna Kadyrova entered Ukrainian art with her iconic ceramic tile sculptures. Tiles, concrete, and stone used as improvised material became a telling metaphor in a devastated Ukrainian economy (*Diamonds*, 2006–2011, *Monuments to Trash*, 2005-09, *Shots and Gaps in the Wall*, 2009–2010). So far, every critic who came to analyze *Diamonds* made sure to emphasize the artistic versatility of this idea, which paradoxically combined two opposite 'aesthetics' — trashy as well as that of super-affluence.[3] The controversial nature of these images offered an entirespecter of reflections on this country's change of its vector of development, authenticity and ersatz culture, true and illusory values. These objects also contained an element of irony, which has repeatedly been featured in other works of the artist (starting with the early buffoonery project *A Roll of Honor*, 2003).

Kadyrova moved away from voluminous forms (*Implicit Forms*, 2010–2012, *Seashells*, 2008–2012) to large planes (the mosaic *Monumental Propaganda*, 2013) and tried new means of expression: collage (*A Crowd*, 2012) and photo installations (*A Housing Estate*, 2015–2016). She increasingly focused on the problem of an integrated approach, working not only with space but also with events happening in a particular location. Back when working on her early project *A Monument to the New Monument* (Sharhorod, 2007–2009), it was not only the metaphor (the latent in the manifested) but also the characteristics of time and location that became important. In each

3 Zhanna Kadyrova. *Albom 2013* [Album 2013]. – Moscow: Podgorskaya N.O., 2013. – P. 32. [In Russian]

given case, whether depicting pavement of Kyiv streets (*Data Extraction*, 2011–2013), or efforts to beautify an abandoned plot at Biriuchy Island (*A Sunshade Fountain*, 2013), or a link between time, action, and location (*Credits*, Drahobrat, and *Subtitles*, Kyiv, 2018) — all the cases involved designing a situation when both the artist and the viewer became participants in building the space and relations of a common area.

Two cross-cutting themes of the most recent creative period (which involved projects created for a given space) — the aforementioned *Market* and *Second-Hand* (which has been going on since 2014) — have become emblematic in this sense as well. In the latter, building on a characteristic marker of Ukrainian reality (the used goods market), the artist stages a number of situational demonstrations (starting with the project in São Paulo, 2014) to link the installation forms with specific places that have histories of their own: the premises of the defunct Darnytsky Silk Mill, which was the pride of the Soviet light industry, a shop of the half-ruined Kyiv Film Copy Factory, and a bus station in a Chernobyl Zone village. It was the second-hand material, the fallen tiles of these objects that went into the making of the "second-hand" ceramic dresses (placed on clothes hangers and mannequins) that reflect the style of the 1960s. New semantic connotations have emerged due to the synthetic nature of the artist's idea, the synergy of spatio-temporal characteristics: market shoppers became viewers in the real space, and the past looked with reproach through the present.

In her early projects, Lada Nakonechna dealt with the problem of shaping the perception of form and content depending on the circumstances and conscious actions of the artist; for example, in the project *Place* (2009) she shaded walls with penciled lines to eliminate the difference between illuminated and dark places, thus misleading the viewer's visual perception and raising doubts about the images on display. In the work *Sea* (2011), the picture was obscured by a wall that determined the angle of view.

Working with such media as photo, video, installation, performance, and drawing (especially on walls), the artist in many cases builds the composition of the work in the way that the viewer becomes a participant of the constructed situation, a part of the work. This approach was used in the installation *Three Perspectives on the Common Field and Three Ways to Purchase It* (2009–2015), which was a wall drawing of a field with three horizons and three separate drawings of "land for sale," which allowed for different viewer visions of one and the same issue. Meanwhile, *The Negotiation Table* installation (2014) makes the viewer a witness and a participant in an event whose outcome is known in advance (because the negotiators look like victims of torture in the photos set in a circle on the table).
The debate frequently touches on mechanisms of subject-object relations with the authorities or manipulation of consciousness. In particular, in the project *An Illustrative Example of My Participation* (2013), which was presented at the PinchukArtCentre, the artist reflects on her position as the organizer of the space, reveals the hidden meanings of a particular place through the created illusion and getting people involved in it, and warns against uncritical acceptance of imaginary openness and public accessibility of an institution replete with hidden power relations.

More than once, the artist has emphasized not only her status as a subject but also her position as an artistic object (such an idea can be seen in a concentrated form in the performance *Bad Face of Ukraine*, 2012). She has also readily worked with texts: *The War in Ukraine* (2015) deals with the dependence of meaning on who and how talks about the war; on the other hand, the project Mobile Portable Model (2014) allows viewers to imagine

themselves as migrants in a state of uncertainty when only the light of a beacon (which illuminates their utterances that are displayed on the wall in the space of installation) inspires hope.

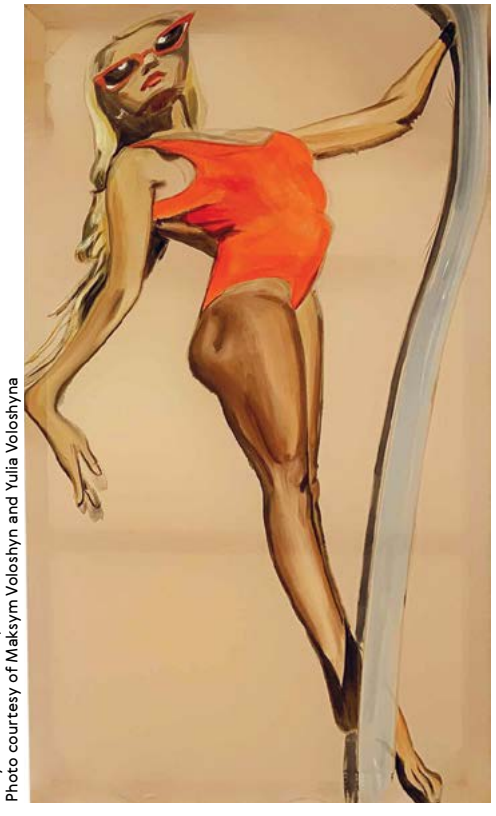
In Background Mode (2018), which is one of her latest projects, Nakonechna returned once again to the principle of exploring and identifying aspects of visual structures, and art as a manipulative tool. Using “dissection” of specific objects, in particular the Soviet artist Mykola Burachek’s landscape Road to the Collective Farm (1937) and other visual and verbal signs that ritualize power and social relations, as an example, she sought to penetrate both layers of meanings present in the painting image (in some cases considering its fragments as if they were under a microscope) and the programmability of everyday life activities which was brought about by Soviet ideologists. Just as before, she was fascinated by “playing” with the viewer, whom she can capture.

Lesia Khomenko likes to emphasize that her true medium is painting. Her understanding of painting is more complicated than traditional painting from nature. Being aware of a disruption of the traditions that hit 20th-century Ukrainian painting art and looking at the logic of its development, the artist demonstrates that painting can no longer avoid becoming an object in space, and space, including galleries, becomes as important an element of expression as works themselves (and therefore, she arbitrarily manipulates them: lays them on the floor, puts the reverse side on display, and pushes them out of the canvas stretchers).

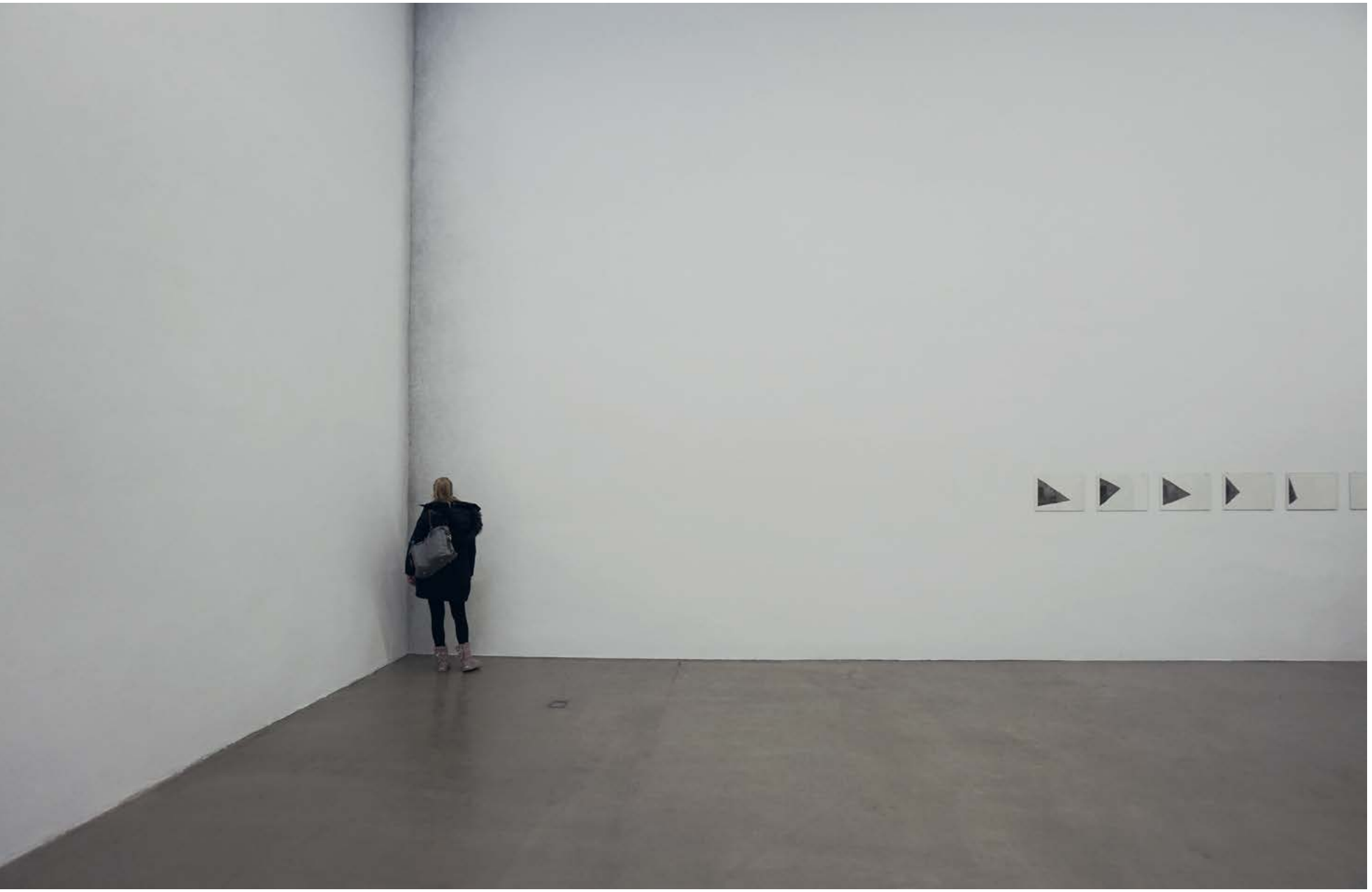
On every occasion, Khomenko returns to the human image. She often provokes the viewer by “exploding” their assumptions which manifests itself in the confrontation between the picture and the space, the human and the environment. Her figures (in particular “giants from the past”) feel uncomfortable and cramped, they fall out of the canvas, their limbs are separated from bodies and heads (*Mixed Feelings*, 2013). Extreme deformation, not only of the images of bodies but also of the canvases (made of elastic biflex fabric) which were assembled on the stretchers in a “wrong way,” was implemented in the project *Lesia Khomenko and Her School* (2018). The artist is concerned with the issues of the adequacy of visions in the context of multiplicative reality and identity as a subject-object concept. Her statements offer a kind of analysis of the creative method and an attempt to grasp the contemporary language of art, down to the extreme of its abstractness as an impossibility to see (the series *After the End*, 2015).

Deconstructivism in image and method is an attempt to decompose, decouple, and thus analytically dissect them. The intention behind such an action has to ultimately face a reverse synthesis process. However, attempts to “paste,” for example, a beautiful Carpathian landscape on ugly blocks of houses for sale (*Wonderland*, 2009), the nude genre on awkward, large-size feminine bodies (*Walruses*, 2007), or the Soviet utopia on the brutal reality of working days (*Summer Home Madonnas*, 2004, *Workers*, 2010) demonstrate the artificiality of constructs and the paradox of inconsistencies, become the image of uncertain reality and the contradictions between what is declared and what actually exists. The project *A Promising One* (2018) probably paves the way for overcoming these contradictions through the formation of an inseparable entity, where vaguely outlined figures dissolve in an unstructured environment. Meanwhile, the exposure of the idea-realization pair through demonstration of the painting’s reverse side, the passive position of the artist regarding the viewer who is asked to identify the characters on their own, the impossibility of holistic perception (the installation pictures overlap) prevent the emergence of the much-desired unity and undistorted vision.

Lesia Khomenko. From the series Walruses. 2007.
Acrylic on canvas



Lesia Khomenko. From the series Lesia Khomenko and Her School. 2018.
Acrylicon biflex fabric, canvas stretcher.
Photo courtesy of Maksym Voloshyn and Yulia Voloshyna



Lada Nakonechna. A fragment of the Background Mode exhibition.
Galerie EIGEN + ART, Leipzig. 2018. Photo by Uwe Walter.
Photo courtesy of Lada Nakonechna and Galerie EIGEN + ART Leipzig/Berlin

The oeuvre of these artists is an emblematic trend of contemporary art in Ukraine, which is special in its socio-critical orientation and thorough analysis of difficult issues, including historical memory, the Soviet past, national and gender identity, work, migration, and ecology. Each author is a striking personality who implements artistic visions of social processes in the form of multi-layered concepts realized in synthesized forms through such means as painting, installation, video, photography, and performance. Their artistic practices are based on the conceptualization of the problems of the collective and the personal, the public and the private space, ideological clichés and the manipulation of consciousness. These artists expect that the development of Ukrainian art will depend to a great extent on reforming the art education system.

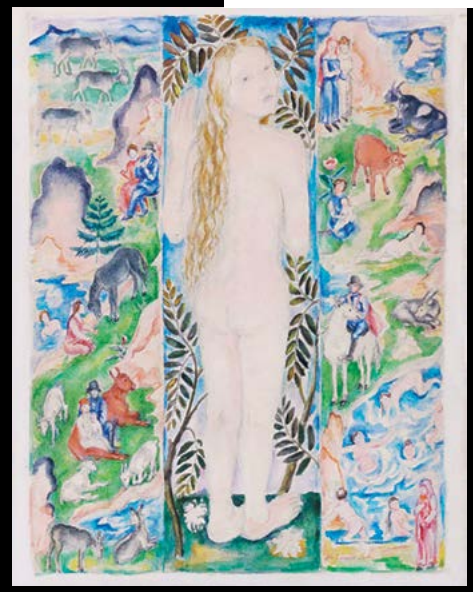
Sensual and Primeval in the Sinyakovs' Oeuvre

TETIANA ZHMURKO

"There were five Sinyakov sisters. Each of them was beautiful in her own way [...] Sinyakov's daughters walked through the woods loose-haired hair and troubled the entire county with their independence and eccentricity. Futurism was born in their home. [Velimir] Khlebnikov was in love with all of them by turns, while [Boris] Pasternak loved Nadya, [David] Burliuk — Mariia, and [Nikolai] Aseev eventually married Oksana," remembered Lilya Brik, who served aswas a hostess of a fashionable salon at the beginning of the 20th century and was the great love of Vladimir Mayakovsky.[1] The place she described is an estate in the village of Krasna Poliana near Kharkiv, which became the birthplace of the Kharkiv avant-garde and the meeting place and debating venue for poets and artists; a place that developed its own philosophy based on harmony with nature and creative freedom.

Krasna Poliana was a creative center that emerged in the mid-1910s. It can be called an expression of the unconscious resistance to the stormy events of the beginning of the century — a hospitable space that the roar of cannon did not reach and where the creative atmosphere prevailed. It had no manifestoes and rules but still was able to gather like-minded people in one place and form a powerful community of artists with similar views and ideas. The five Sinyakov sisters formed the heart of this group. They were intelligent, talented, and in the creative pursuit: Mariia in the field of fine arts, and Zinaida, Nadezhda, Kseniia, and Vera focused on music. The figure of Mariia Sinyakova is especially important for the history of the Ukrainian avant-garde since her art was a fusion of futuristic experiments and folk crafts.

1 Brik, Lilya. *Iz vospominaniy: Almanakh s Mayakovskim* [A Memoir: Almanac with Mayakovsky]. – Moscow, 1934. – P. 64. [In Russian]



Mariia Sinyakova. Slavic Venus. 1910s. Watercolor on paperr. Photo courtesy of Dmytro Horbachov

The beginning of the 20th century was replete with artistic associations that shared the ideas of naturism and emancipation of art and were based on rigorously defined theoretical foundations or worldview similarity. This approach was built-in in the very system of avant-garde thinking, under which artists self-organized pro or against certain concepts and rules. They presented their manifestoes, wrote texts, and tried to open up the human being's new opportunities in art. I would like to mention in this context Die Brücke group, which existed in Germany in 1905–1913. The artists who formed it were inspired by primitive art, children's drawings, and the creativity of the insane, in which they found the necessary expressive power and sincerity.[2] In summer, they held plein-air sessions on the lakes of Moritzburg near Dresden, where they strolled without any clothes on and depicted nude models, postulating creative freedom with their behavior which was to be subject to no rules

2 This group of artists existed in Germany in 1905–1913, including Fritz Bleil, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, and Erich Heckel. They were the founders of German Expressionism.

Mariia Sinyakova. Illustration for Aleksei Kruchenykh's book Four Phonetic Novels. 1927

and restrictions at all, and setting artistic expression as the main creative criterion. While pursuing different directions in their creative quests, Krasna Poliana and Die Brücke were, however, consonant in their creative approach, where nature became an important basis for exploring the world and achieving creative harmony.

The childhood of the Sinyakov sisters was spent amidst the beautiful nature of the village of Krasna Poliana, where their father, merchant Mikhail Sinyakov, owned a large estate of 12 hectares. Here, Mariia and her four sisters ran a small farm where they had a garden, a kitchen garden, and some poultry. It was there that the artist began to create her first watercolors, inspired by everything that she saw around: local peasant women's attire, painted chests, and nature. The sisters wore short dresses following "the European fashion," posed naked for each other, and sunbathed.

Mariia Sinyakova remembered: "The nickname 'nude Sinyaks' ['Sinyaki-golyaki' in Russian] stuck to us in the village of Krasna Poliana near Kharkiv. People saw us sunbathing in the summer, which was still a novelty in the depth of the countryside. Khlebnikov inserted this nickname into one of his poems but restyled it as "Singols" ["Singoly" in Russian]. Later, a commenter annotated it as a name of an unknown Mongolian tribe. This is ridiculous. This was about us. 'Forward! Forward! The squad! Forward! Forward! Singols!'"[3]

3 Horbachov, Dmytro. *Avanhard. Ukrainski khudozhnyky XX st.* [Avant-Garde. Ukrainian Artists of the First Third of the 20th C.]. – Kyiv: Mystetstvo, 2016. – P. 289. [In Ukrainian and English]

To the locals, the Sinyakov sisters seemed to be eccentric, just as their friends who visited the girls. When the sisters grew older and began spending more time at the estate in summer, writers and artists from all over the world were coming there, including David Burliuk, Vladimir Mayakovsky, Velimir Khlebnikov, Vasily Yermilov, Boris Kosarev, and Boris Pasternak. In their summer home, the sisters set up something similar to what is called a summer residence now, where people could come and make art in a creative atmosphere. The estate was home to freedom of thought and creativity, as well as the idea of unity with nature. In art, this was reflected in the combination of innovative Cubo-Futuristic techniques with "naïve" peasant aesthetics, which especially influenced the formation of Kosarev's and Yermilov's creative oeuvre. Krasna Poliana formed a community of artists, where they exchanged thoughts and ideas, wrote and read poems, and created paintings and graphic works.

For many artists, this was not only a site of cultural exchange, but also an opportunity to escape from the brutal reality of the time, which included the First World War, the revolution, and the famine and chaos. It was there that Velimir Khlebnikov found refuge from being conscripted into General Anton Denikin's White Army in 1919.4 Khlebnikov dedicated numerous works to the Sinyakov sisters, whom he called "a bonfire of sisters," and these works make up his so-called Krasna Poliana cycle, including "Three Sisters" and "Blue Shackles" (the title is a play on word, since "Sinyakovy" ["the Sinyakovs" in Russian] and "siniye okovy" ["blue shackles" in Russian] sound similar), in which their family name became an occasion for a literary play which the Futurist poet liked so much.

"Green fields, arable land, woods, the river covered with light fog, and the blue sky — this was my picturesque academy. I have drawn and painted since becoming self-aware. I did it from nature. I painted young boys and adult men, girls with Madonna faces and women. They were nude, and I depicted them bathing, under the rays of the sun, in the shade of trees' spreading crowns. I painted them among the animals, namely goats and rams. Oh, I had so many models!" recalled Mariia Sinyakova, emphasizing the importance of nature in her creative method and choice of themes.[5] Despite this experience, Sinyakova was an artist of urban culture. She received professional art education at the Kharkiv City School of Drawing and Painting and in the private studio of Yevgeniy Agafonov, and she was a member of the Blue Lily group.[6]

She studied in Moscow, first at the School of Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture, then in the studio of Fedor Rerberg and Ilya Mashkov, and it was then that she got to know the majority of visitors to Krasna Poliana.

4 The conscription drive in question was caused by the Civil War (1917–1922) when Kharkiv was briefly occupied by Denikin's Volunteer Army which aimed to overthrow the Soviet government.

5 Bozhko, V. "Khudozhnik Mariia Sinyakova". - Krayeznavstvo. – 2003. – No. 1. – P. 174. [In Russian]

6 This art studio existed in Kharkiv from 1907 to 1911 at the studio of Agafonov in Chernyshevskoho Street, 14 (the house was demolished in the late 1980s).

Sinyakova traveled around Germany and Central Asia, where she saw a distinct version of folk art, in which oriental mythology intertwined with bright local flavor. The artist was familiar with the work of Henri Rousseau, Henri Matisse, and Paul Gauguin, whose influence is evident in her works.

Her fine sense of nature, attention to local flavor, and icon-painting approach found their expression in the watercolor Eve (1916). The composition of the work is based on the scheme of ancient icons, where the minor compositions, called border scenes, explain and develop the main image, which in this case is a life-size naked female figure, shown as the center of the universe. She is well-rounded and squat, with exceedingly large feet, hands holding flowers and an apple, and a face resembling an ordinary peasant woman with ruddy tanned cheeks. She is a rural Eve, as could be readily seen in Krasna Poliana. Her well-rounded forms, which emphasize the popular fertility, express not symbolic, but sensual, vital meanings in this biblical story.

Eve's special "corporeality" can be seen as coming from a combination of pure chaste sensuality, naturally present in everyone, with the rural chthonic energy usually released in folk dances, during fairs and festivities. Color is an important component of Sinyakova's works. Vivid and built on localized patches, it harks back to folk art and, at the same, time preserves icon-painting symbolism, where the blue color inevitably signifies purity and divine power.

For Sinyakova, nature was also an alternative to the world which seemed to be plunging into war and technical chaos that distanced man from nature. It is on display in her cycle which includes *Expulsion from Paradise* (1916), *War* (the 1910s), and *Bomb* (1916), where a holistic picture of the world, with clear top and bottom, just like in the icon, is replaced by fragmentary, collage-like images. They become expressions of loss and confusion, where the harmonious/natural/creative is obscured by the technical/aggressive/destructive. The war turns into a primeval evil in Sinyakova's works. Themes of the artist's own time get allusions to traditional biblical stories inserted in them, and *Expulsion from Paradise* or *The Last Judgment* are examples of that. The active blue color, combined with sprinklings of red, acquires a symbolic meaning, becoming the color of heaven and blood and mixing the 'low' everyday reality with the 'exalted' essence of the Universe.

The history of Krasna Poliana ended in the mid-1920s, with the sisters' move to Moscow, where their fates were to diverge greatly. The avant-garde movement in Ukraine came to a definite end in the early 1930s, with the introduction of Socialist Realism as the only permitted method. The so-called "struggle against formalism," with all avant-garde works falling under that definition, destroyed many of the artists who had visited Krasna Poliana. Mariia Sinyakova was completely forgotten as an artist from the 1930s onwards. She was forced to paint toys and to work

Mariia Sinyakova. War. 1920. Watercolor on paper. Photo courtesy of the Mystetskyi Arsenal National Art and Culture Museum Complex

in a printing factory. In 1952, she was expelled from the Union of Artists "for kowtowing to Western art." Sinyakova's oeuvre saw its revival only in the 1970s after her first exhibition was held at the Writers' House in Kyiv.[7]

The story of the estate in the village of Krasna Poliana formed a special cultural phenomenon of the early 20th century, which brought together the folk rural culture with its corporeal and vital principle, Western ideas of naturism, and formalist artistic pursuits. This story, like many others, has long been sunk in the fog of the Soviet era, which stigmatized the naked body by forcibly placing it in the social/ medical discourse while depriving it of its basic sensual element. The erotic would fully find its continuation only in the art of the 1990s, reopening a theme that had been tabooed for many years and making the body an important argument in discussions about social and political freedom.

7 The exhibition was held at the Writers' House in Kyiv in 1969.

IN THE FOCUS

Aleksandra Ekster. Three Female Figures

LIDIIA APOLLONOVA

Aleksandra Ekster fits three vertical figures in the almost square format of the composition. The artist did not set herself the task to make a portrait: all faces are shown as pink and white patches, in which the viewer can barely see the lines that resemble the outlines of eyes and lips. However, as stylized as these images are, the creator still endows them with specific elements: clothing, accessories, and pets they hold in their arms. This has led researchers to believe that the characters in this canvas had real prototypes. Here, Ekster portrayed herself and two friends of hers, artists Natalia Davydova and Yevheniya Pribylskaya.

Aleksandra Ekster. Three Female Figures. 1909–1910. Oil on canvas.
Photo courtesy of the National Art Museum of Ukraine

Ekster stands to the left, attired in a red dress and a broad-brimmed hat. If you look at the portrait photographs of the artist taken during those years, her noble, slightly artistic posture resembles the posture of the figure in red. The image of the artist is emphatically feminine. Her attire reflects the fashion trends of that time: an hourglass dress with an accentuated waist creates an S-shaped silhouette, while a large hat only emphasizes its elegance. Ekster looks at the viewer, turning her back on the other characters. Davydova and Pribylskaya are depicted frontally. The painter seems to emphasize their shared status as artists with identical clothing, postures, and gestures. White dresses (perhaps. overcoats), tall men's collars and narrow neckties which were fashionable among women at the time, bowler hats, supplemented by a lack of any visual hint at hairstyles (as opposed to the figure in red) create images devoid of obvious feminine traits.

The composition of the work, at first glance, is quite static. There is no open interaction between the characters. The scene is more like a posed scene for a camera. The main rhythm of the painting is based on the juxtaposition of three expressive verticals and two horizontal surfaces (blue background and ocher-yellow stripe). However, the internal dynamics insert diagonals into the work, which are formed as a result of several planes interacting, different in shape, color, and shades. Heorhii Kovalenko, who studies Ekster's oeuvre, wrote that the space of her painting was the space of color alone, which acted there as an absolutely material category, endowed with density, mass, energy, and movement.[1] Not only does color own the space between figures, but it has also become the source of light as well. White segments, painted both on the clothing of the characters and against the background of the work (in the top right corner), seem to reflect and, at the same time, emit a bright light that falls on the faces of the figures and blinds them. From 1909–1911, Ekster called two cities home: Paris and Kyiv. In the former, the artist grew familiar with contemporary art and began to study it, and she promoted it in the latter city. Sometimes, she traveled to St. Petersburg and Moscow. At the same time, she spent almost every summer at Nataliya Davydova's mansion in the village of Verbivka and visited Yevheniya Pribylskaya in the village of Skobtsi, where she took part in the activities of the Kyiv Handicraft Society.[2] Her apartment and studio in Himnazychna Street in Kyiv gradually became a center of contemporary art.[3] Meanwhile, Ekster met many prominent people of her time at Davydova's mansion and become friends with them, including philosophers Nikolai Berdyaev, whose ideas she started to follow and Lev Shestov, Polish composer Karol Szymanowski, and famous pianist Arthur Rubinstein.[4]

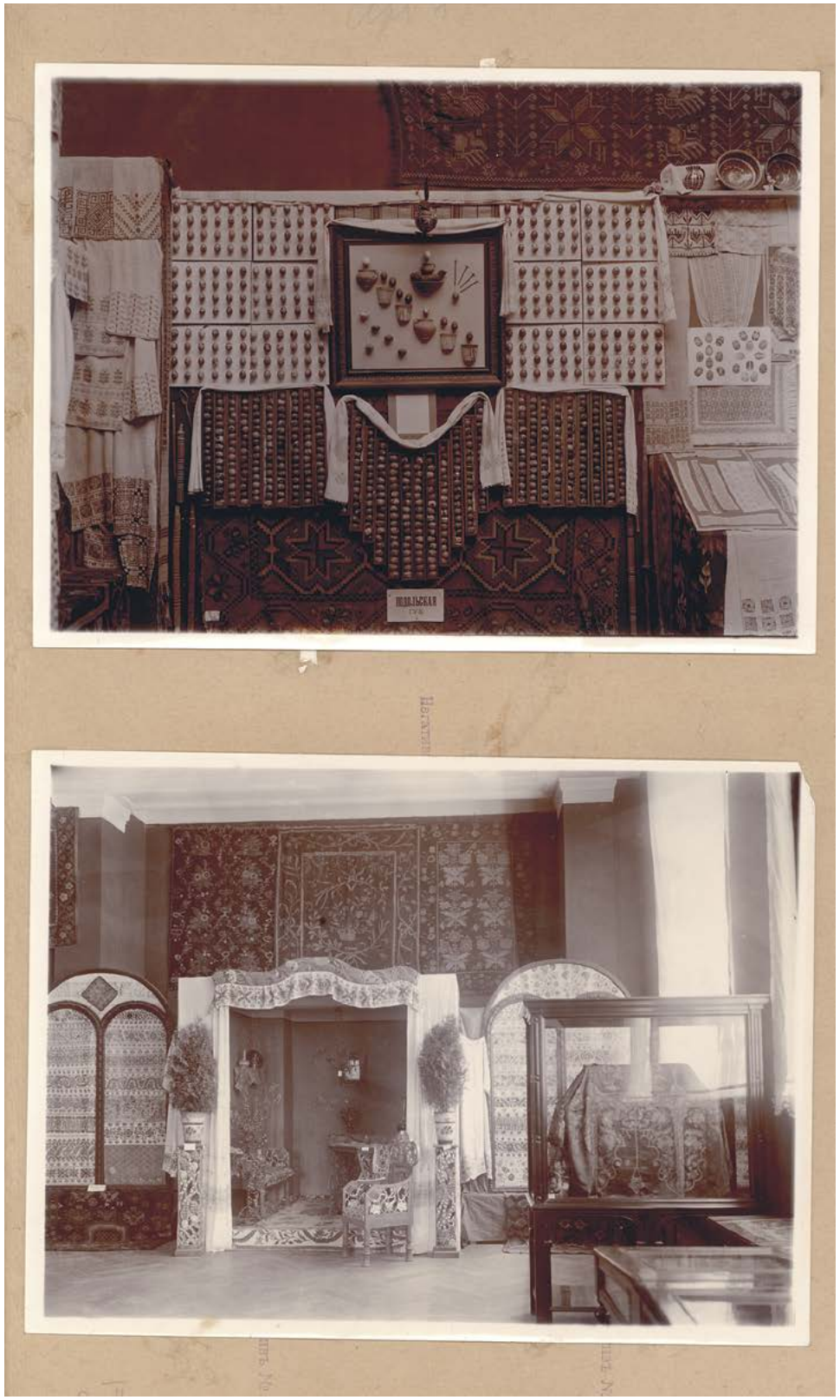
In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a movement aimed at reviving and supporting folk crafts emerged in the territory of present-day Ukraine. It was predominantly formed by the aristocracy who could afford to create craft shops, cooperatives, folk schools, organize research expeditions, study and systematize the material they found.
Active initiators and participants of this movement included Yuliia Hudym-Levkovych (mother of Natalia Davydova), Varvara Khanenko, Princess Nataliya Yashvil, and Anastasiia Semyhradova. In 1900, Davydova set up an embroidery studio in Verbivka, the purpose of which was to revive and preserve the lost principles of the vernacular embroidery. In the summer of 1904, Ekster came to Davydova's family estate in Verbivka for the first time and immediately joined the team effort. Under the direction of the artists, peasant

1 Kovalenko, Heorhii. *Aleksandra Ekster* (in 2 vols.) – Moscow, 2010 – Vol. 1. – P. 60. [In Russian]
2 Now, in the Kamianka District of Cherkasy Oblast.
Now, known as Veselynivka of Baryshivka District, Kyiv Oblast.
3 Now, Leontovycha Street.
4 He was Natalia Davydova's cousin.

Aleksandra Ekster. Kyiv, the 1910s. The author of the photo is unknown.
Photo courtesy of the NMUFDA

craftswomen not only copied the patterns of old embroidery but also varied canonical ornamental motifs, combining them with modern forms: belts, women's bags, pillow patches.[5] There, Ekster discovered Ukrainian folk art as an inexhaustible source of inspiration and material for studying the laws of composition, rhythm and, of course, color. Meanwhile, the Emperor Nicholas II Kyiv Arts, Crafts and Science Museum was solemnly opened on December 30, 1904.[6] The director of the museum was the ethnographer and art scholar Mykola Biliashivsky, who often visited Verbivka. While providing scholarly advice, he invited Davydova and Ekster to participate in the preparatory commission of the first Exhibition of Applied Arts and Handicrafts. During 1905, members of the commission, led by Princess Natalia Yashvil collected, restored, systematized, and studied samples of almost all the forms of folk art from around Ukraine. Ekster and Davydova set up the embroidery department. In addition, Ekster participated in the pottery department as well (she was made responsible for curating exhibits from Kyiv County of Kyiv Governorate).
The exhibition opened on February 19, 1906, and lasted until May 1. Ekster was perhaps the first designer-cum-architect of exhibition space to practice in Kyiv. She designed the interior of a room from a wealthy 17th-century Ukrainian house to be recreated in the exhibition space and came up with the guidelines for displaying embroideries and carpets. Playing on the constructive nature of the ornament and color, she created a whole spatial composition of embroideries, Easter eggs, and carpets. Ekster's expertise as a theater decorator was at work there. It can be assumed that many of the plastic ideas that the artist applied in her scenographic practice in the 1910s were intuitively found by her during her work on the exhibition.

5 "She [Ekster. – *Lidiia Apollonova*] often spoke of Ukrainian peasant art being a giant source of inspiration for her. She remembered working with lowly peasant embroideresses. What amazing taste and unmistakable color intuition they were endowed with!" See: Memoirs of Ekster's student in: Kovalenko, Heorgii. *Aleksandra Ekster* (in 2 vols.) – Moscow, 2010 – Vol. 2. – P. 346. [In Russian]
6 Now, known as the National Art Museum of Ukraine.



Sample department, a room of antique 17–18th-century samples (the first room of the museum's upper floor). The exhibition of Ukrainian antiquities (embroideries, carpets, cassocks) from the private collections of Varvara Khanenko, Yelena Rakhmanova, Count Aleksei Bobrinsky, and Borys Zhuk, as well as those collected by the Commission for the Organization of the Exhibition. At the center: the reconstructed room of a wealthy 18th-century Ukrainian house, recreated according to drawings by Aleksandra Ekster and at her expense. Photo by I. Knypovych (?). 1906. The NMUFDA. Fond 1. Opys 2. Sprava 1. Item 5. Plate 2.

At the same time, the artist proved to be a true enlightener as well. She was so impressed with pottery from the village of Dybyntsi that she invited the local master potter Kalenyk Masiuk to attend the exhibition.[7] He gave workshops in the museum rooms, creating wheel-turned pots, bowls, and flasks in front of the audience. Beyond the replenishment of the museum collection, one of the main consequences of this exhibition was the creation of the Kyiv Handicraft Society (it existed from 1906 to 1917). Ekster and Davydova were its active participants (the latter became the first chairperson of the organization). The Society promoted the development of the Ukrainian handicraft industry, and the products of local craftspeople were popular in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Paris, London, and even in the distant city of Chicago. A little later, namely in the mid-1910s, the Verbivka studios hosted a creative experiment conducted on the initiative of Ekster and Davydova: avant-garde artists (Kazimir Malevich, Lyubov Popova, Nina Genke-Meller, Kseniia Boguslavskaya, Ivan Puni, and Georgii Yakulov) collaborated with folk masters (Vasyl Dovhoshyia, Semen Pshechenko, and others) to synthesize Suprematist compositions and plastics with forms of folk art.

It was not until 1908 that Ekster first dared to exhibit her own works. From that time on, she regularly participated in exhibition projects in Kyiv, Moscow and St. Petersburg, and not merely as a participant, but also as a co-organizer and initiator. In particular, in 1908, a group of young artists from Kyiv, St. Petersburg and Moscow (David Burliuk, Vladimir Burliuk, Lyudmila Burliuk, Mikhail Larionov, Aristarch Lentulov, and Aleksandra Ekster were the group's core) held the "Zveno" ("Link") exhibition in Kyiv.[8] This exhibition is commonly considered as the start date in the history of the Ukrainian avant-garde. Simultaneously with her work in Verbivka, Ekster collaborated with the training and demonstration studio located in the village of Skobtsi. In 1910, the local landowner, Anastasiia Semyhradova, opened a handicraft outreach station in that village. Pribylskaya graduated from the Kyiv Art College in 1907. She took part in the "Zveno" exhibition and she was interested in and meticulously studied the Ukrainian ecclesiastical embroidery art and fabrics of the 18th century, Art Nouveau applied arts, and traditional folk art. Peasant women were involved in the outreach station's work. The training they received there allowed some of them to become folk masters, namely, Hanna Sobachko-Shostak, Natalia Vovk, and Paraska Vlasenko further worked as artisans. By the way, it was Sobachko's oeuvre, which Ekster encountered later in the 1910s, that had a great influence on her quests in the realm of abstract painting.

Ekster first arrived in Paris in early 1906. The artist immediately immersed herself into local artistic life. From that time, the Kyiv artist came to Paris regularly, sometimes staying there for a few months, as when she decided to take a course in one of the city's art academies. Very tellingly, the artist attended not one but two educational institutions there. The first of them was the traditionalist Académie Julian, famous for its rigid system of teaching the classical drawing method (the school opened in 1868). For the Ukrainian artist, academic drawing, good training in technique, and knowledge of the laws of classical composition offered a path to freedom and confident creative expression, even in her most experimental works. Interestingly, Ekster's favorite artist was Nicolas Poussin, a French master of the 17th century and the founder of the Classicism school.[9]

7 Now, in Kaniv District of Kyiv Oblast.

8 The exhibition opened on November 2, 1908 in the premises of Jindřich Jindřišek's Musical Instrument Store at 58 Khreshchatyk Street. See: Kashuba-Volvach, O. "Neochikuvane mystetstvo: istoriia vystavky 'Lanka'" [Unexpected Art: The Story of the "Zveno" Exhibition] // *Suchasne mystetstvo*. – 2009. – No. 6. – P. 266-285. [In Ukrainian]

9 By the way, when Aleksandra Ekster opened her studio in Kyiv in 1918, studying the principles of composition displayed in Poussin's paintings became obligatory for all her students. More information is available here: Kovalenko, Heorhii. "Oleksandra Ekster ta yii studiia (Kyiv, 1918)"

The second institution to have Ekster among its students was the Académie de la Grande Chaumière (opened in the fall of 1904), which was a new-format school, where students were to choose among multiple departments. There, the artist met Fernand Léger, and her friendship with him lasted for many years. In Paris, Ekster also made friends with Guillaume Apollinaire, Pablo Picasso, Max Jacob, Georges Braque, and Henri Matisse. An encounter with Fauvism, represented by Henri Matisse, was among the liveliest impressions the artist had at the time. Matisse's influence is also felt in *Three Female Figures*.

The work *Three Female Figures* was transferred to the National Art Museum of Ukraine in 1937 from the holdings of the Kyiv State Museum of Russian Art (now known as the Kyiv Art Gallery National Museum). The canvas was relegated to the "special collection" at once.[10] The works of "formalists," "nationalists," "enemies of the people" had to be hidden or destroyed, and their creators purged. Therefore, the names of most such artists were erased from the history of Ukrainian art for many years.

Today, this small-size painting is on display at the permanent exhibition of the National Art Museum of Ukraine, in a room dedicated to avant-garde art. It is usually shown side by side with another work of the artist — *A Bridge*. Sevres — which was painted in 1912. These two canvases were separated by a very short time, but the difference is obvious. The color scheme of the cityscape is quite different, as cold silver-blue shades prevail there. The plastic principles of reproduction deployed there also show that Ekster's inspiration came from another recent trend in art, namely the Cubism. It brought the deformation of space to the painting, the decomposition of visible objects into individual elements, and the addition of time to the three-dimensional representation of it as the fourth dimension. In those years, literally, every work signified a new stage in Ekster's development, being a result of studying the new artistic language and testing it through the artist's own experience.[11] Moreover, that language appeared in its various variants: Neo-Impressionism, Fauvism, and, finally, Cubism. Landscape and still life were the main genres of Ekster's easel works until the second half of the 1910s when she turned to abstraction and began to experiment with color and dynamics.[12] Human images appear only rarely in Ekster's creative pursuits at the time. *Three Female Figures* is rather an exception to that rule then in force in her painting oeuvre. Therefore, it is likely that the image of a female figure in a bright red dress with a dynamic silhouette tells a story of the painter herself: an artist who offered "a strikingly interesting combination of European culture and Ukrainian life."[13]

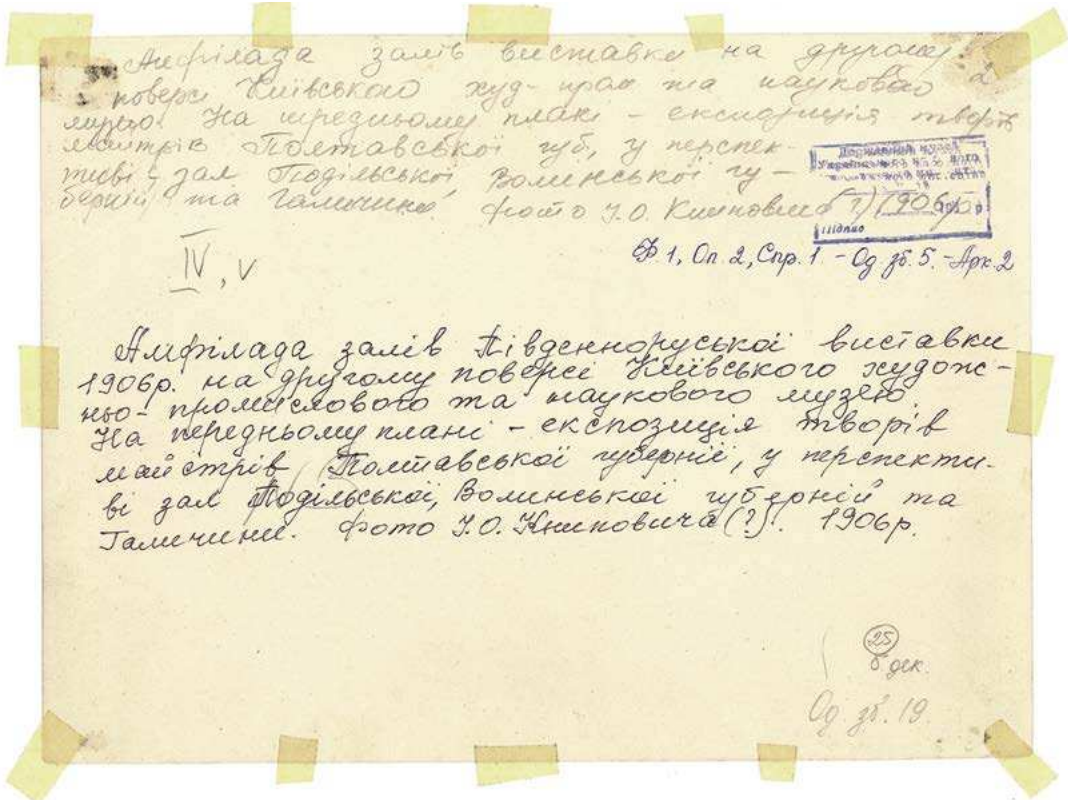
[Aleksandra Ekster and Her Studio (Kyiv, 1918)] // *Ukraiinskyi modernism 1910–1930* [Ukrainian Modernism 1910–1930] (Album). – Khmelnytsky: Halereia, 2006. [In Ukrainian]

10 The Special Secret Collection, also known as *Spetsfond*, was formed at the National Arts Museum of Ukraine (then the State Ukrainian Museum) in 1937-1939. Works from many museums of Ukraine were brought here, which, according to the party leadership of the USSR, "distorted reality" and thus posed a threat to the "new society." More information is available here: *Spetsfond 1937-1939 z kolektsiii NKhMU* [The Spetsfond 1937–1939 from the NAMU Collection] (Catalog). – Kyiv: Feniks, 2016. [In Ukrainian]

11 The author of the first monograph about Aleksandra Ekster, Yakov Tugendhold, wrote about the early period of her creative career as follows: "[Ekster. – *Lidiia Apollonova*] is extremely logical in her development and her strivings... without scurrying between themes, she consciously moves from one quest to another, increasingly difficult and complicated. She went through all the stages that no French artist, even of the farthest left-wing variety, has been able to avoid." See: Tugendhold, Yakov. *Aleksandra Ekster kak zhivopisets i khudozhnik stseny* [Aleksandra Ekster as a Painter and Scenographer]. – Berlin: Zarya, 1922. – P. 12. [In Russian]

12 In particular, in the album *Color Rhythms* (1916–1917).

13 Koonen, Alisa. *Stranitsy zhizni* [A Few Pages from My Life] - Moscow, 1975. - P. 225-228. [In Russian]



The enfilade of exhibition rooms on the second floor of the Kyiv Arts, Crafts and Science Museum. In the foreground: a display of the works by folk craftspeople of the Poltava Governorate; in the distance: the room housing artworks from Podillia and Volyn Governorates as well as Galicia. Photo by I. Knypovych (?). 1906. The NMUFDA. Fond 1. Opys 2. Sprava 1. Item 10. Plate 3, 4.

Tetiana Yablonska. Bread

KATERYNA BADIANOVA

The purpose of this article is to make an attempt to interpret the painting *Bread*, created by the artist Tetiana Yablonska in 1949.

Bread was painted in the first post-war decade, by a young artist who was a fresh graduate of Kyiv Art Institute. The work won the Stalin Prize and became famous in the Soviet Union. The appearance of *Bread* and Yablonska's formation as an artist coincided with the pinnacle of the formative period of Socialist Realism in the era of mature Stalinism.

Tetiana Yablonska at work on the painting Bread. 1949.
The author of the photo is unknown.
Photo courtesy of the artist's family

Modern historical studies and interpretations of Yablonska's work focus mainly on the artistic evolution of the painter who abandoned typical beliefs of the Stalinist era and turned her attention to purely artistic objectives. The current understanding of the Socialist Realist art as a dead-end phenomenon, and, therefore, one not deserving detailed analysis, turns Socialist Realism into a negative and universal definition, unsuitable for constructing alternative art histories. Apologetic descriptions emphasize the high artistic qualities and the lack of ideological load in the given work, as well as the fact that the artist was able to reflect the "universal values" of life, happiness, and creativity and imbue them with a sincere personal feeling.[1] This perception, however persuasive it may seem, is still erroneous because it distorts the essential qualities of a Socialist Realist painting. In Bread, the artist does not overcome imposed Socialist Realist teachings and objectives, as the opposite situation actually exists: the painting is a perfect embodiment of the Socialist Realist tenets.

Researcher of the Soviet novel and Slavist Katerina Clark stated that "it is not in theoretical articles, but in practical examples that one should look for an answer to the question 'What is Socialist Realism?'"[2] There is no sufficient definition of what Socialist Realism is, and this is so because of the abstractness of its definitaions, where it is variously described as "the official method of Soviet art" or as a set of generalized and difficult to apply in practice prescriptions of "class consciousness," "party consciousness," and "optimism" which Socialist Realist works had to follow. Instead, Socialist Realism is a canonical set of rules that relies on foundational works, exemplary for its canon.[3]

The picture *Bread* became that non-opportunist work which was officially sanctioned as an exemplary realistic painting that displayed vivid ideological expressiveness which "conveyed the truth of life" and was a perfect realization of the typical images of "the Soviet collective farmer" and "bread."

During her months-long artistic residence at the Lenin Collective Farm in the village of Letava, Chemerivtsi District, Khmelnytsky region, Yablonska made hundreds of sketches and studies for *Bread* as she was looking for the right composition and types. This was not a typical post-war derelict collective farm, but a collective farm that became known throughout the country during the five-year rebuilding plan (1946–1950) due to its extremely high wheat and beet yields. In the village of Letava, eleven high-performing peasants were honored in 1947 with the titles of the Hero of Socialist Labor. The achievements of such exemplary collective farms and the elation of collective labor were to be regarded as worthy of imitation.

In the painting of Yablonska, monumentally significant figures of female collective farmers at work are placed against the background of colossal grain-stacks and wheat ears strewn around a threshing floor. The cheerful mood of Bread, when seen against the

Tetiana Yablonska. Bread. 1949. Oil on canvas.
Photo courtesy of the artist's family

background of a non-ideal, internally contradictory reality, is now regarded by commentators as a false image of reality, which was, in the best case, provoked by the artist's naïve view of the situation.[4] Such an interpretation intentionally avoids raising questions of correlation between the artistic image, the real life and the real implementation of the tasks connected to socialism building, and how these issues are addressed in *Bread* as an exemplary Socialist Realist work. After all, it is at this very moment that the key paradox of Socialist Realism is manifested to its fullest extent, the paradox originating in the theory of Socialist Realism, succinctly presented in the formula of Andrei Zhdanov which defines it as "most sober practical work with grandiose perspectives." The Soviet art is neither an art of "the truth of life" nor "a lie"; at the heart of Socialist Realism is the contradiction of reality and ideal, a discourse that produces reality through a narrative, that is, achieves the transformation of an ideal into reality (according to Yevgeniy Dobrenko).[5] This duality of Socialist Realism enables interpreters to move smoothly from a realistic discourse into a utopian one (according to Katerina Clark).[6]

1 See: Polyanskaya, O. "Goryacheye serdtse Tatyany Yablonskoy" [The Warm Heart of Tetiana Yablonska] // Tretyakovskaya Galereya. – Moscow, 2014. – No. 4. – P. 83. Retrieved from: https://issuu.com/uspensk/docs/tg-45-all/77 [In Russian] and Sklyarenko, Galyna. "Tvorchist Tetiany Yablonskoii (1917–2005): Osobystyi shliakh v istoriii radianskoho zhyvopysu" [The Oeuvre of Tetiana Yablonska (1917–2005): A Personal Path in the History of Soviet Painting] / *Ukraiinski khudozhnyky z vidlyhy do nezalezhnosti* [Ukrainian Artists: From the Thaw to Independence]. – Kyiv: ArtHuss, 2018. – P. 19-46. [In Ukrainian]

2 Clark, Katerina. *Sovetskiy roman: istoriya kak ritual* [The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual]. – Yekaterinburg: Izdatelstvo Uralskogo Universiteta, 2002. Retrieved from: http://www.fedy-diary.ru/?p=2661 [In Russian] Quoted here after the English original: Clark, Katerina. The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual. – Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000. – P. 3.

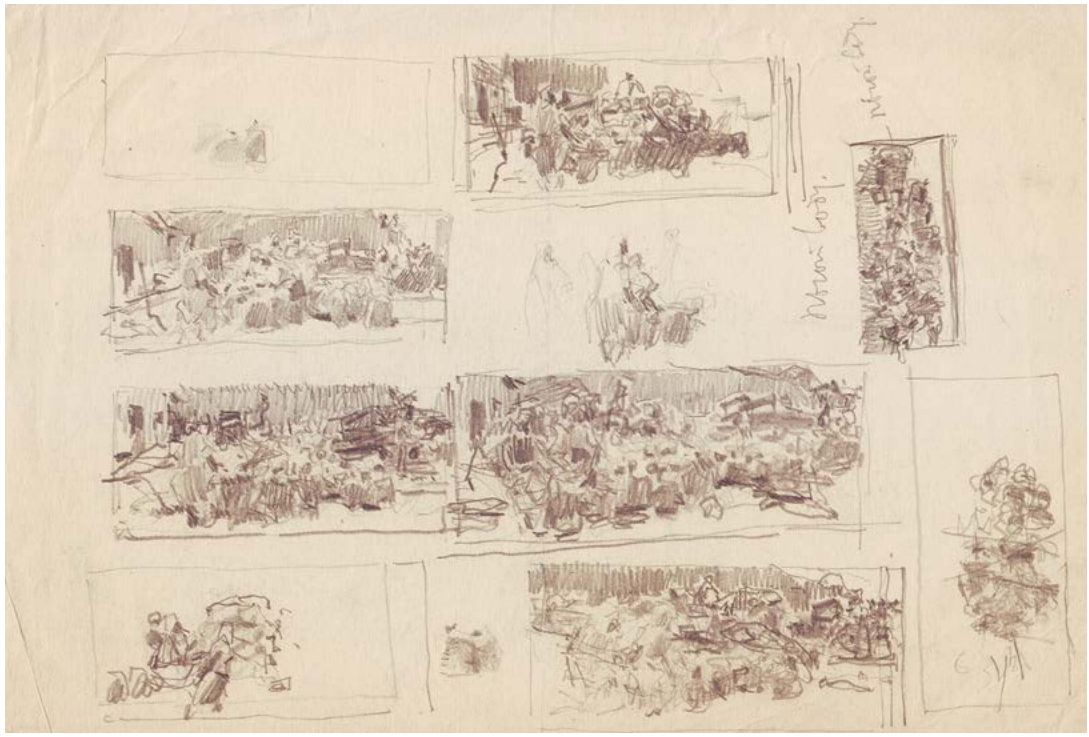
3 Quoted from: Clark, Katerina. *Sovetskiy roman: Istoriya kak ritual* [The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual]. – Yekaterinburg: Izdatelstvo Uralskogo Universiteta, 2002. Retrieved from: http://www.fedy-diary.ru/?p=2661 [In Russian]

4 Sklyarenko, Galyna. "Tvorchist Tetiany Yablonskoii (1917-2005): Osobystyi shliakh v istoriii radianskoho zhyvopysu" [The Oeuvre of Tetiana Yablonska (1917-2005): A Personal Path in the History of Soviet Painting] / *Ukraiinski khudozhnyky z vidlyhy do nezalezhnosti* [Ukrainian Artists: From the Thaw to Independence]. – Kyiv: ArtHuss, 2018. – P. 19-46. [In Ukrainian]

5 Dobrenko, Yevgeniy. "Sotsialisticheskiy realism i realny sotsializm" (Sovetskiye estetika i kritika i proizvodstvo realnosti) [Socialist Realism and Real Socialism (Soviet Aesthetics and Criticism and the Production of Reality)] // *COLLOQUIA*. 18 (2007). – Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore. – P. 57-91. Retrieved from: http://www.llti.lt/failai/Nr18_04_Dobrenko.pdf [In Russian]

6 Clark, Katerina. *Sovetskiy roman: Istoriya kak ritual* [The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual]. – Yekaterinburg: Izdatelstvo Uralskogo Universiteta, 2002. Retrieved from: http://www.fedy-diary.ru/?p=2661 [In Russian]

Study for the painting Bread. 1948.
Pencil on paper. Photo courtesy
of the artist's family



Study for the painting Bread. 1948. Pencil on paper.
Photo courtesy of the artist's family

In official texts about the painting, Yablonska noted that *Bread* reflected a retreat from the possibilities offered by the art of painting, but the picture acquired a new quality, becoming "life itself."[7] Inspired by the "cheerful and joyful collective work" of female collective farmers, the artist tried to raise her creative artist's labor to their level, or equate the artistic work with the farmer's work: "As an artist, I wanted very much to glorify their work. I felt a great duty to these people. I wanted to tell with my painting about these wonderful people and about my new thoughts and feelings."[8] This attitude reflects an inherent internal contradiction of Socialist Realism, when an artist is identical with an audience in this imagined social harmony, but at the same time, the former remains in the status of "a creator," who assumes the role of representing a certain society or conveying a certain image of that society. Yablonska's feeling of "duty" to the collective farmers combined with a salient moment of sudden humility in the face of their working zeal. The artist inscribed dedication to the women depicted on the canvas, along with the name of the collective farm inscribed on grain sacks ("just as these sacks actually looked"), and then, while working on the painting, hid the dedication under a layer of grain. This hidden mention raises an interesting issue of embarrassment of her own sublime role as a female workers' representative in the arts. What was it, if not the desire to reconcile the contradiction present at the heart of Socialist Realism?

Bread is neither a mere piece of visual propaganda nor a message of ideological character, but a holistic image of high artistic quality that works precisely as an image on the level of the sensual and social, completely capturing, exciting, and stirring up the feelings of its audience. The painting is not a set of portraits of real Soviet female collective farmers as high-performing agricultural workers, but rather the "essential" image of the Soviet female collective farmer, an embodiment of the ideal: a projective appeal to the collective harmony of a holistic person within a new society, which is modeled by Socialist Realism. "Searching for the sense of greater working zeal," the artist turns the chief character's head straight toward the viewer, thus extending the boundaries of the painting into the space of contemplation and making the viewer a participant in the exalted joy of teamwork.[9] The very name of the painting acts as an inherent textual frame: the word "bread" instantly aroused literary and cinematic associations.
The artwork reproduces the ideas that constructed the Soviet culture of the time.

There are several different historiographical currents that normalize the art of Socialist Realism. These currents are overall varieties of historical mythology, lacking a critical reflection on the foundations of this method. Adherents of one such rather widespread current seek to interpret Socialist Realism as a relationship between the state, ideology, and an artist. This relationship, according to them, is chiefly marked with violence and resistance, and within this current, the prevailing attitude is a unilateral desire to perceive the content of the Soviet artwork as one imposed by the government and the party. Yablonska most likely felt and shared the foundational values of the Soviet project which she wanted to reflect on in her painting. It is a mistake, however, to speak of the unilateral influence of the state ideological apparatus on the Soviet artist, and to regard all

7 This retreat from purely artistic objectives was influenced by "re-educating" criticism, which had been meted out to Yablonska over her painting *Before the Start* (1947). The picture had also been nominated for a Stalin Prize, but because of the changing ideological climate, it was criticized on the eve of the competition. In a separate article, a critic inquired into the painting's shortcomings: it did not reproduce Soviet youth and was too picturesque.

8 Quoted from: Yablonska, Tetiana. Kak ya rabotala nad kartinoy "Khleb" [How I Worked on the Painting *Bread* // *Iz tvorcheskogo opyta* [Sharing Creative Experience]. – No. 3. – Moscow, 1957. – P. 75. [In Russian]

9 Yablonska, Tetiana. "Kak ya rabotala nad kartinoy 'Khleb'" [How I Worked on the Painting *Bread* // *Iz tvorcheskogo opyta* [Sharing Creative Experience]. – No. 3. – Moscow, 1957. – P. 75. [In Russian]

Veronika Yadukha. Heroes of Socialist Labor. 2016. The artist examines the relationship between the typical image of the female collective farmer as shown in Yablonska's painting Bread and the photo portraits of real female collective farmers awarded with the Hero of Socialist Labor title. The work was done on the basis of photos found in the Museum of Local History in the village of Letava during the Method Fund's seminar "Bread. Socialist Realism".

individual creativity as evidence of the dissident behavior under conditions of totalitarianism. The French thinker Michel Foucault coined the term "discursive practices" to describe the mechanisms and institutions through which the state extends its ideology to all spheres of society and the ways of how individuals support power without a need to impose it from the outside. The relationship between the individual/author and the discourse is set up in such a way that "the former emerges as a function and arrangement of the latter, and the discourse needs the speaker since it is precisely the speaker who allows the discourse to reproduce its own order every time."[10] On the other hand, an interpretation of a Socialist Realist work (or more broadly, of the entire Soviet period art), when conducted using a generalized historical background, risks preserving conservative or stereotypical beliefs and ideas coming from previous interpretations.

Another interpretation exists primarily due to the conservatism of art studies; it maintains that the essence of Soviet art can be found in the properties of its own internal material. This interpretation mystifies Yablonska's oeuvre as an embodiment of realistic art, where timeless, universal human values are in focus. The Soviet art drew on its own traditions, and it developed new artistic forms on their basis, as well as it interacted with extra-artistic aspects, among which politics and ideology played a key role. The conflicts and contradictions that made the basis of the state ideological apparatus permeated both the artwork as such and individual oeuvre. Suffice it to mention the never-ending controversy over the definition of Socialist Realism and, above all, the required presence

10 Foucault, Michel. "Poryadok diskursa" [The Order of Discourse] / *Volya k istine: po tu storonu znaniya, vlasti i seksualnosti* [The Will to Truth: Beyond Knowledge, Power and Sexuality]. – Moscow: Kastal, 1996. – P. 49-95. [In Russian]

Study for the painting Bread. 1948. Watercolor on paper and cardboard. Kamianets-Podilskyi Historical Museum and Sanctuary, Ukraine. Photo courtesy of the artist's family

of realism and romanticism in Socialist Realism.[11] The content of the Socialist Realist tradition poses another question: being presented as a continuous progression, the Socialist Realist tradition was actually made during the 1930s from a neat row of selected realistic works from multiple eras that lost their place in history when recruited to construct the "classical tradition" of Socialist Realism.

Interpreting Yablonska's creative biography and works outside the context of real Soviet history, judging them by artistic qualities alone, makes one take off the table the analysis of the specific traits of Socialist Realism as an artistic phenomenon and accept the complete loss of context underlying the given artwork. A study using such a perspective overlooks other qualities and facts of Soviet history: the repression (which provoked the phenomenon of self-censorship, among other things), the influence which the institutional mechanisms that supported the production and representation of art had on the artistic scene, the role of social privileges one enjoyed as an exemplary artist, member, and functionary of a privileged professional corporation, the degree of identification of the aesthetic with the political, and the issue of normative relations between free individual creativity and ideological coercion.

11 Dobrenko, Yevgeniy. "Sotsialisticheskiy realism i realny sotsializm" (Sovetskiye estetika i kritika i proizvodstvo realnosti) [Socialist Realism and Real Socialism (Soviet Aesthetics and Criticism and the Production of Reality)] // *COLLOQUIA, 18* (2007). – Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore. – P. 57-91. Retrieved from: http://www.llti.lt/failai/Nr18_04_Dobrenko.pdf [In Russian]

Alla Horska. The Banner of Victory

LIZAVETA GERMAN

The Banner of Victory mosaic was created in 1969–1970 as a central element of the decoration in the entry hall of the Young Guard Museum in Krasnodon, Luhansk Oblast. The creators of the mosaic were Alla Horska and Viktor Zaretsky, assisted by Anatolii Lymariev and Borys Plaksii. Volodymyr Smyrnov acted as the project's architect.

Study for the monumental panel
The Banner of Victory Flag (Relay Race).
Photo courtesy of the artist's family

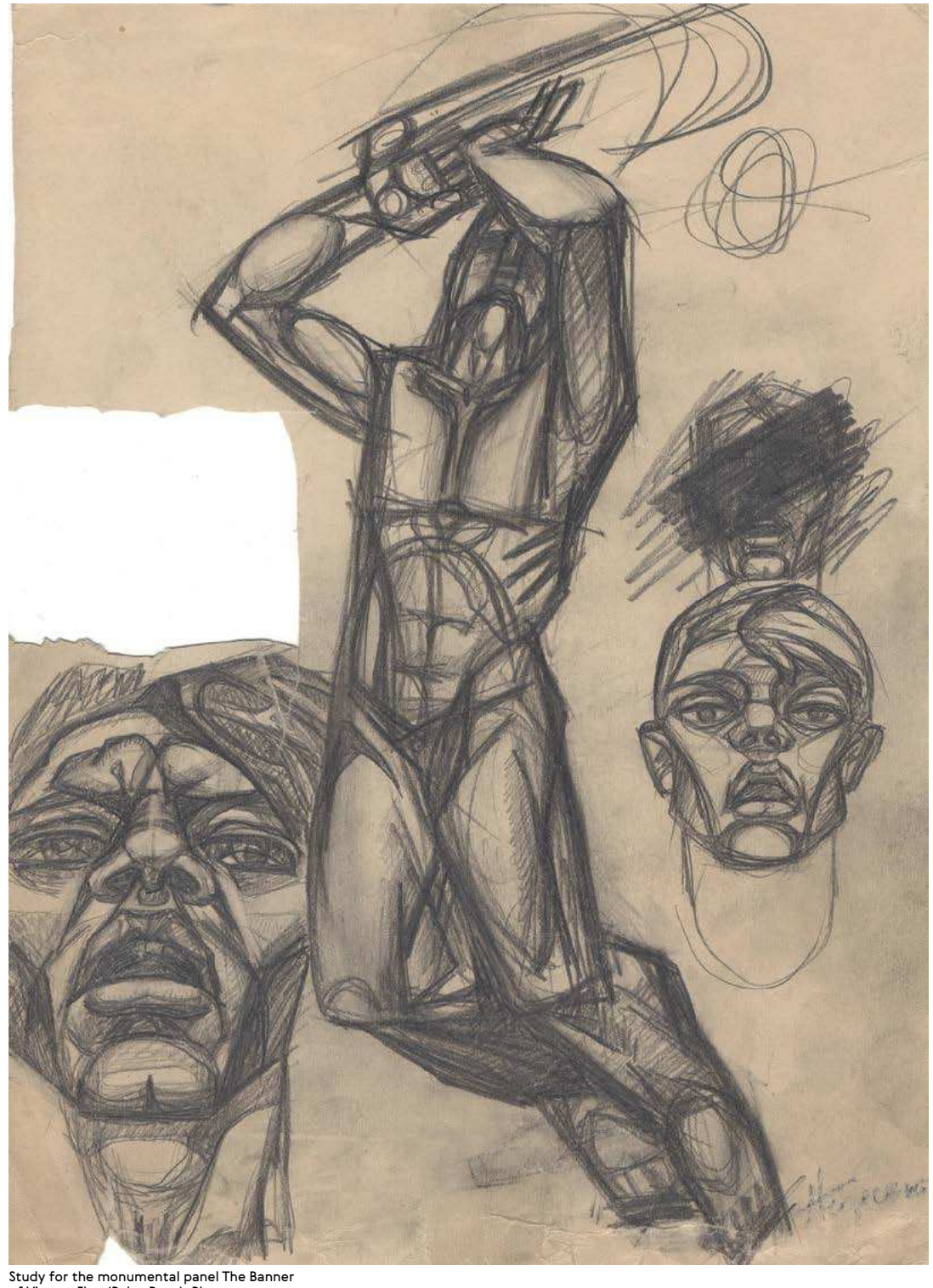
Monumental panel The Banner of Victory Flag (Relay Race).
The Young Guard Museum. Krasnodon, Luhansk Oblast.
Photo by Yevhen Nikiforov

Several studies for this mosaic panel have survived. The largest of them dates from 1968 and is a full-fledged easel work made in the cardboard application technique. Comparing this work with the documentary images of the mosaic itself and analyzing some formal differences between them will help us shed some light on the specifics of their creators' artistic practice.

Four human figures make a compositional and semantic center of the mosaic and the study. Three of them are depicted frontally as if moving towards the viewer. The fourth figure, placed to the left, is curved in a half-turn as if recorded at the moment of falling.
The figures of the three frontal characters are emphatically monumental, chunky, and sturdy. The sense of these figures' steadiness is achieved by the dominance of steep straight lines, synchronous steps of massive feet, and upward direction of their arms. Like atlantes, the three figures "support" not only the vaulting of the two-dimensional compositional space of the panel but also the three-dimensional space of the museum's entry hall and its ceiling. The connection between the mosaic image and the interior of the museum is confirmed by the image of an architectural element that visually closes the composition of the panel on its right edge and resembles the façade of the museum's modernist building. This element is presented in a linear perspective, which adds dynamics to the whole composition and enhances the sense of external direction of the figures' movement as if pointed beyond the wall covered with smalt. The confident integrity of the center and right of the panel turns to an imbalance on the left, where the fragile outlines of the fourth figure make the viewer turn their attention to the fifth and sixth figures. The puzzlingly and unnaturally curved bodies are located in the panel's lower part, where they visually merge with the details of the environment. This environment and the entire background of the panel appear at first glance as fantastic, abstract, and decorative. Such a technique was characteristic of other monumental objects created by Horska and Zaretsky as well since they paid great attention to the intricate combinations of textures and forms of various materials. This made even the most realistic of their works look solemnly and to some extent phantasmagorically (for example, *The Bird of Hellas* panel inside a restaurant in Mariupol or *Prometheis* on the wall of the school No. 5 in Donetsk).

The museum's permanent exhibition speaks of an underground anti-fascist organization called the Young Guard, which operated in the city of Krasnodon during its World War II occupation by the German army until 1943. The heroic activities and the martyrdom of the young guerrillas were immediately canonized in the Soviet ideology. The organization included young residents of Krasnodon who, according to Soviet historiography, spread anti-fascist leaflets and performed acts of sabotage. One of these acts, according to legend, involved raising red flags on prominent buildings in the city and the surrounding area to mark the 25th anniversary of the October Revolution. At the beginning of 1943, the organization was exposed, most of its members were killed, and their bodies were dumped in a mine shaft. These two episodes were known not from documentary evidence, but primarily from Aleksandr Fadeyev's novel *The Young Guard* and the 1948 film adaptation of the same name, that are covered in the mosaic panel. For example, the solid red background is a constellation of numerous banners that converge in a flagpole held by one of the central characters. The title of the mosaic also recalls this episode. The scene on the left actually depicts the very moment of the slain underground activists' bodies dramatically falling underground, with the interior of the mine covered in a flash of light from the depths, fragments of rocks, and patches of gleaming coal.

The color techniques are key to further interpreting the theme and ideas of the panel. The visual division of six figures into two groups — the living and the dead — occurs not



Study for the monumental panel The Banner of Victory Flag (Relay Race). Photo courtesy of the artist's family

Alla Horska. Kyiv, 1944. Photo courtesy of the Sixtiers Movement Museum, a division of the Kyiv City History Museum

only because of the contrast between the compositional stability of the first group and the precarious position of the second but also through the expressive transformation of the color scheme from cold-pale to orange patches. Blue, ocher-colored, and olive-gray combinations emphasize the fallen figures having bled white. Meanwhile, the central characters are portrayed not as simply full of power and vital energy, they seem to emit inner light. Enhancing this sense and achieving the literal effect of radiance relied on the true mastery of the technique of smalt-setting. This effect was similarly used by Byzantine mosaic masters to imbue mosaic depictions of saints with the air of unreality and symbolism. Makers of *The Banner of Victory* borrowed another technique, obviously taken from the arsenal of ancient sacred art: the young male figure far to the right figure is outlined in a golden contour as if tearing him out of the real physical space. These techniques suggest that the artists did not depict the scene of local underground activists' brave struggle, as their subsequent death is already shown in the left corner. Rather, we have heroes who have symbolically rose from the dead before us. They step over the physical fact of death, leave it behind, and carry the idea of struggle — and the sky-sized banner of as its symbol — towards the guests of the Krasnodon Museum and beyond the horizon where their gaze is directed. However, what struggle is actually depicted here?

It is worth mentioning that another variant of the panel's title occurs in some Soviet texts about the mosaic, namely *Relay Race*. It confirms and develops our hypothesis of the truly correct interpretation of its plot. The girl and the young men, illuminated by golden light, are not young guards of the wartime era, but rather their symbolic descendants of the 1960s. Young people take the relay flag from the hands of the guerrillas, who belong to mythical stories the youth were brought up on and are already effectively devoured by nothingness. This explanation also appears to be fitting given the concept of the museum in Krasnodon. In addition to the information and artifacts about the Young Guard, the museum's permanent exhibition deals with the rebuilding and expansion of the city after the war, as well as with the direct participants in the process: local Komsomol members, Stakhanovites, war veterans, heroes of the socialist labor and other prominent citizens. Thus, the term "young guard" in the context of this particular museum can be seen as including also the first post-war generation, which had to build up the country's physical assets in the 1950s and then to liberalize society and enliven its worldview in the 1960s, primarily in the realm of culture. The mosaic's anonymous heroes visually belong rather to the iconography of the late Stalin film with their faces full of farcical pathos and somewhat meaningless heroic poses. However, the mosaic's makers — artists Horska, Zaretsky and their colleagues — already belong to another generation, depicted by filmmakers of the Thaw era in films such as *Ilyich's Gate* and *Walking the Streets of Moscow,* where the main value is no longer collectivity, but individuality.

The Ukrainian art of the post-war Soviet period is now commonly considered to be dichotomous, with the division into binary pairs: official — underground, socialist — nonconformist, propaganda — free-thinking, and so on. Indeed, an orderly system of government regulation still applied to all stages of professional practice of art in the 1960s to 1980s period: from the choice of the work's theme and the methods of its artistic realization to its display and sale to the only possible "collector" — again the government, acting through its proxies in museums, enterprises and various institutions with mandatory "corporate" collections. Artistic practice outside this system did exist, and it actually grew more active in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the period which became known as the Khrushchev Thaw. However, works that formally belonged to non-figurative art styles and other "-isms" (as the Soviet critics labeled all modernist currents in the painting art) had no way to get exhibited beyond the confines

of the artist's circle of trusted colleagues and friends. At the same time, it would be a grave mistake to treat formal and informal art as parallel lines that never intersected. Here, a more relevant mathematical metaphor would be that of two curves intertwined so intricately that it is impossible to establish the exact number of points of contact. In fact, all the creators who today belong to the pantheon of artistic nonconformism were members of the Union of Artists and worked on official commissions as well, and they worked sincerely and honestly, putting their professional acumen to fullest use possible. Moreover, many iconic artists found opportunities to implement, while working on these commissions, their formal ideas that were developed laboratory-like behind closed doors of their studios. It is impossible to fully analyze the achievements of Valerii Lamakh, the creator of the period's possibly principal *opus magnum*, namely *Books of Schemes*, without taking into account his programmatic monumental works. It is equally impossible to explore graphic and picturesque abstractions of Hryhorii Havrylenko without looking into his laconic book illustrations to Dante's *Vita Nova* and Daniil Kharms' children's stories. The coexistence and mutual enrichment of these two types of practice was a manifestation of the systemic failures afflicting Soviet cultural policy. That manifestation reached its most acute and tragic point in the professional career and personal life of the artist and human rights activist Alla Horska.

Today, the name of Horska has become synonymous with the Ukrainian movement of the Sixtiers, and she is regarded as a holy martyr of her generation. Indeed, Horska was perhaps the only representative of the artistic community to meet a violent death for her outspoken political views. However, this tragic fact sometimes sidelines the fact that Horska was also one of the most sought-after monumental artists of her generation. Together with her husband, renowned artist Viktor Zaretsky, and other artists, she created a number of projects in Kyiv, Donetsk, Mariupol, and Luhansk during the 1960s. Horska's personal biography is a fantastic example of a worldview transformation.
The artist was born and raised in a family that can be described as belonging to the Soviet establishment. Her father Oleksandr Horsky was one of the organizers of the Soviet film industry, he worked as a manager at Yalta and Leningrad film studios. The family was Russian-speaking, and Horska learned Ukrainian consciously as an adult, under the influence of her closest associates, including such people as Yevhen Sverstiuk, Ivan Svitlychny, Les Taniuk, Vasyl Symonenko, who can be called without any exaggeration the iconic figures of the Ukrainian 1960s. Horska would be called a civic activist were she to live nowadays. She co-founded the Creative Youth Club and investigated the secret burial fields in Bykivnia Forest near Kyiv, where the NKVD executioners dumped corpses of its victims in the 1930s. The artist participated in protests against the persecution of Ukrainian human rights activists. She corresponded with the political prisoner Opanas Zalyvakha, who she had collaborated with when creating the stained glass window *Shevchenko. Mother* for the lobby of Shevchenko University, which was destroyed in 1964. All these activities were duly noticed by the regime: Horska was spied on, and the apartment she shared with Zaretsky was bugged.

At the same time, Horska continued to work on fully officially-commissioned and state-funded monumental projects. The Krasnodon mosaic was perhaps the most complex and large-scale of these. A study cutout for *The Banner of Victory* was created in 1968 — the year of the Soviet invasion of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, launched to stop the reforms initiated by that nation's government and known as the Prague Spring, which occurred four years after the Thaw helmsman Nikita Khrushchev was removed from the Soviet leadership. This event marked the symbolic end of political liberalization and the beginning of political repression aimed primarily at the newly formed Ukrainian dissident movement. For the Kyiv

Study for the monumental panel The Banner of Victory Flag (Relay Race).
Photo courtesy of the artist's family

Sixtier milieu, 1968 was also a turning point. One of the most famous dissident documents, known as the Protest Letter of 139, or the Kyiv Letter appeared precisely then, signed by leading cultural figures and scholars of Ukraine who demanded that the party leadership stop the practice of illegal political trials. Alla Horska was among the signatories, and she was expelled from the Union of Artists for the second time for it. This means that she completed the Krasnodon mosaic already as an "unofficial" artist. The grand opening of the museum took place on May 6, 1970. Six months later, Horska would be found killed in a cellar near the residence of her father-in-law, Ivan Zaretsky.

We do not know exactly how "official" this study was: whether it was intended for the review by the commission and what was the response to it; whether it was ever exhibited for public viewing; whether it had any technical significance for the preparation of the mosaic or served merely as an inspiration, a free creative study in the quest for a larger form. This cutout looks like a fully completed work, a kind of easel mosaic, only instead of smalt, ceramics, colored stones and glass, the artists used paper, cardboard, and fabrics of different densities, textures, and colors. Just like with a large mosaic, composing such a work requires a subtle sense of composition and color, the ability to master the fine details and build a complete structure from them. Compared to the final piece, the cutout is much more relaxed and spectacular. The faces and figures are fashioned in an emphatically brutal and androgynous manner, though the central female figure is shown stripped naked (unlike the similar figure in the final mosaic). This detail is borrowed from an iconic figure in the history of world art — the woman depicted in Eugène Delacroix's painting *Liberty Leading the People* (1830) that commemorates the July Revolution in France. All the lines are sharp and the angles are painfully acute, so the image seems to have been composed of splinters. The colors are glaringly rich, with some extravagant details, such as crimson reflections from a mottled purple-crimson banner on azure-colored fractured bodies, making the banner seem a fantastic living being.
It is impossible to imagine this study presented in its entirety on the walls of a Soviet museum. However, Horska and her colleagues probably had more than enough of both imagination and audacity, and when these qualities did not find use in creative projects, the artists displayed them in their will for good citizenship, which is why their works today are seen as artifacts of this will. That is why the true significance of Horska's last major work should be sought first and foremost in the political plane.

Oksana Chepelyk. The Fortinbras Chronicles

HALYNA HLEBA

The Fortinbras Chronicles is a feature film made in 2001 by the artist Oksana Chepelyk and based on the essay collection of the same name, authored by Oksana Zabuzhko in the 1990s.[1]

1 Produced by Ukrhinokhronika, 2001, 30 minutes long. Director and screenwriter: Oksana Chepelyk; cinematographers: Volodymyr Pika, Bohdan Pidhirny; based on adapted texts by Oksana Zabuzhko; composer: Oleksandr Nesterov; sound director: Leonid Moroz; starring: Iryna Androsova, Hennadii Korzhenko, Heorhii-Hryhorii Pylypenko, Rostyslav Luzhetsky, Viacheslav Barabola. The film was produced with the support of the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine.

Still from Oksana Chepelyk's film The Fortinbras Chronicles. Photo courtesy of the artist

The film's central character is an abused and humiliated woman who represents Ukraine's past and present. The film is built around the confrontation of the female and the male, as well as the independent society and the Soviet political matrices.
However, the modern young viewer perceives it as an intricate and dramatized play staged in a costumed BDSM manner.

Starting early in her practice, Chepelyk was interested in social-critical art with particular attention to feminist themes, even though irony and sarcasm were more prominent as instruments of artistic expression in the Ukrainian art scene of the 1990s.[2] Oksana Zabuzhko described this tendency in her texts as one of the diagnoses of the era, and Chepelyk put this idea into the mouth of the film's narrator: "Being ironic has become more important than being sincere. For what is sincerity in an era of massacres and lies?"[3] The film is based on historical circumstances in which the woman, as an allegory of the nation, becomes a victim of humiliating games played by ignoble history-makers, as well as the phenomenon of "forgetting trauma" that we have inherited from the totalitarian and colonial past.[4] It is precisely the difference of contexts, the failure to understand how the cause and effect relationship operates in history, and the emergence of opposing associations in different generations of Ukrainians that now affect not only the interpretation of a particular work of art but also the perception of the national history as a whole.

INTRODUCTION

Documentary black-and-white chronicles of the 1960s, both public and classified, formed the beginning of the film. Together with the off-screen narration, they defined its plot. The chronicle images showed the landmark space flight of Yuri Gagarin, covered by both the Soviet authorities and the world media, and documentary footage of the technogenic tragedy in Kurenivka which killed hundreds of people. Such confrontation between the official and the silenced recreates the situation prevalent in the Soviet system with its strict information controls. From the very first frames of the film, Chepelyk created a critical focus for the audience, and the director tried to make them perceive what is portrayed as a juxtaposition of good and evil, of truth and lie. The filmmaker also deliberately hypertrophied the socio-political roles of men and women. This artistic metaphor allowed her to speak not of specific people, but of general events displayed into universal categories.

The 1960s chronicle as told by Chepelyk shows how, at some point between the events of a silenced tragedy and the first flight of a man into space, a girl, the future symbolic heroine of the film, is born in the Kurenivka maternity hospital. It is noteworthy that the artist's own biographical data coincides with that of her character. This suggests, if not an autobiographical nature of the film, then at least the fact that the artist reproduces the traits of time and social consciousness that characterized her own generation of women: born under the Soviet system, they had to win their independence already after Ukraine's independence.[5]

2 Hleba, Halyna. "Oksana Chepelyk: Ya rozpochala feministychnu abo gendernu temu zadovho do..." [Oksana Chepelyk: I Started Working on the Feminist or Gender Theme Long Before...] // *KORYDOR* [Electronic source]. – December 11, 2018. – Retrieved from: http://www.korydor.in.ua/ua/woman-in-culture/oksana-chepelik-feminizm-gender.html [In Ukrainian]

3 A quote from Oksana Zabuzhko's *The Fortinbras Chronicles* (1999), read out in Oksana Chepelyk's film.

4 Ibid.

5 Brailovska, Halyna. "Oksana Chepelyk. *The Fortinbras Chronicles* at the exhibition 'A Space of One's Own' in PinchukArtCentre" // Be in Art [Electronic source]. – December 23, 2018. – Retrieved from: http://www.be-inart.com/post/view/2957 [In Ukrainian]

Still from Oksana Chepelyk's film
The Fortinbras Chronicles.
Photo courtesy of the artist

Still from Oksana Chepelyk's film The Fortinbras Chronicles.
Photo courtesy of the artist

The film's story runs as follows: a woman, attired in a suit and holding a folder in her hands, enters the premises of an operating plant, where she gets abducted by two monsters in human bodies who suspend her in the air with chains.[6] Throughout the film, they abuse her in a variety of ways — stripping her, using her naked body as a table for a card game, coating her with paint, pouring water on her, gluing shut her mouth and smearing it with lipstick, rolling a toy train over her body, stamping it with bureaucratic seals and licking the stamps clean from her skin — and then dumping the mutilated heroine on the cement floor. All of this is a metaphor for the transience of the impact that seventy years of Soviet rule made on the body of Ukrainian history.

Re-shackled and again suspended in the air, the heroine lives through the next stage of her story, as Ukraine achieves independence. A paper mock-up of St. Michael's Cathedral is erected on her body, and builders support it in the air by inappropriately-looking pillars, imitating "a revival of culture and traditions."

The film ends with the segment marked as occurring in 2001 and the ritual walk of the heroine, now attired in white robes, sporting long hair, and a lily wreath on her head. Two wooden carts with burning candles go behind her, attached to her white and infinitely long braids. They quickly catch on fire behind the heroine's back and become a horrifying embodiment of apocalyptic thinking at the end time, the boundary of two millennia.

THE WOMAN'S IMAGE

The feminine image in Chepelyk's film is a layered combination of three cultural Ukrainian symbols which all personify a woman, namely the Mother Motherland monument on the hills of Kyiv, the Virgin Orans mosaic (known as the Indestructible Wall) in the conch of St. Sophia Cathedral in Kyiv, and the ethnographic archetype of the Hearth Mother.[7]

The monumental image of Mother Motherland became a Soviet construct of the secular and symbolic embodiment of the State. This symbol grew popular and was actively promoted with a view to displacing the cult of the Mother of God as a religious embodiment of the idea of womanhood in the wartime and postwar years.[8] The Hearth Mother became the third, ethnographic form, being the national embodiment of the family's guardian spirit.[9] The intellectual elite of the late 1980s would actively appeal to the Hearth Mother for the purpose of reviving national and patriarchal traditions and gaining independence.[10] It was the ethnographic image of the Hearth Mother that replaced the Soviet ideological Mother Motherland and became the basic component of the search for a new national identity of the Ukrainians.[11] Through this layering of feminine characters, the image of the film's protagonist and the woman of the 1990s was a mutant —

6 Filming took place on the premises of the Darnytsia Wagon Repair Plant

7 Averintsev, Sergey. "Do ziasuvannia smyslu napysu nad konkhoiu tsentralnoii apsydy Sofiii Kyiivskoii" [Towards Clarification of the Meaning of the Inscription above the Conch of the Central Apse of Saint Sophia Cathedral in Kyiv] / *Sofia-Logos. Slovnyk* [Sophia-Logos. A Dictionary] 3rd edition. – Kyiv: DUKH I LITERA, 2007. – P. 280-318. [In Ukrainian]

8 Günther, Hans. "Arkhetipy sovetskoy kultury" [Archetypes of Soviet Culture] / *Sotsrealisticheskiy kanon* [The Socialist Realist Canon]. – St. Petersburg: Academic Project, 2000. – P. 743-784. – Retrieved from: https://media.ls.urfu.ru/493/1258/2726/2592/1235 [In Russian]

9 In the public consciousness, the image is mutated: it is held to originate with the chthonic mermaid goddesses and was modified in late Soviet journalism to the point of identification with patriarchal archetypes of womanhood.

10 Pavlychko, Solomiia. "Posttotalitarna kultura yak nosii znevahy do zhinok" [Post-Totalitarian Culture as a Carrier of Contempt for Women] / *Feminizm* [Feminism] (A collection of articles, ed. by Vira Ageyeva). – Kyiv: Vydavnytstvo Solomiii Pavlychko "Osnovy," 2002. – P. 57-65. [In Ukrainian]

11 Skurativsky, Vasyl. *Rusalii*. – Kyiv: Dovira, 1996. – P. 60. [In Ukrainian]

psychologically depressed, economically controlled, programmed for survival, and originating in the tragedy of Soviet double standards applied to gender equality. Chepelyk intentionally sacrifices her heroine to intensify gender confrontation. The artist presents the archetypal image of the Hearth Mother, characteristic of the Ukrainian rural tradition, as disfigured and defiled.[12] She treats the militant and static Mother Motherland as a passive and supine subject of tyranny. Meanwhile, the godlike Orans is desacralized by the nakedness of the corruptible body. The final image of the heroine, dressed in white robes and followed by a flame, embodies all three personalities of the chaotically designed construct called "the Ukrainian Woman of the New Millennium."

THE MAN'S IMAGE

It is the man who assumes an active role in the film. Unlike the female image, he is a composite character, distributed among several minor ones. Among them, the first to appear is the father who is the archetype of the first man in the life of a woman, shown in the film running to the maternity hospital at the time of the heroine's birth. Then come other and much more active characters of the film, namely the two monsters who personify the principle of domination and repression. Chepelyk depicts one of them as a dwarf, the latter being an ambivalent and chthonic mythological symbol, which can be both a benefactor and a pest. The monsters apparently play with the heroine: they see her as a toy and her body as a playground. Not only they do represent totalitarian leaders of the 20th century who played political games on Ukraine's soil, but they also serve as a symbol of intimate relations with men, which often become subversive.[13]

The rider in white is the third film character. He gallops across the torture site at the very moment when the monsters unshackle the heroine and drop her straight to the ground in a game of chance. Neither noticed nor rescued by the rider, she remains lying on the ground. The rider stands for a passive participant of the events who does not interfere with the current state of affairs and only reflects the fluidity of time. He is a personification of external forces, which Ukrainians commonly shift responsibility for the fate of the nation to, as they expect heroic rescue from an individual actually limited to the role of a chronicler.

FORTINBRAS' IMAGE

Another hero, who exists beyond the confines of a particular heroine's life in Chepelyk's film, is the literary and symbolic image of the Crown Prince Fortinbras. This character from a Shakespearean tragedy appears in the end, his role being to record historical events in the chronicles.[14] Shakespeare used this character to accumulate the pathos of tragic passions and ground them in everyday life.

However, Zabuzhko and Chepelyk interpret Fortinbras as a post-tragic figure who "is doomed to act and record events at the same time, transforming them into chronicle reports." According to Zabuzhko, this is exactly what distinguishes the post-tragic era as opposed to

Still from Oksana Chepelyk's film The Fortinbras Chronicles.
Photo courtesy of the artist

12 Pavlychko, Solomiia. "Posttotalitarna kultura yak nosii znevahy do zhinok" [Post-Totalitarian Culture as a Carrier of Contempt for Women] / *Feminizm* [Feminism] (A collection of articles, ed. by Vira Ageyeva). – Kyiv: Vydavnytstvo Solomiii Pavlychko "Osnovy," 2002. – P. 61. [In Ukrainian]

13 Chepelyk, Oksana. "Absurd kak sredstvo preparirovaniya realnosti" [Absurd as a Means of Dissecting Reality] // *Absurd i vokrug* [Absurd and around It] (A collection of articles). – Retrieved from: https://culture.wikireading.ru/66970 [In Russian]

14 Kochubinska, Tatiana. "Isterzannoye telo Ukrainy v rabotakh Oksany Chepelik" [The Tormented Body of Ukraine in the Works of Oksana Chepelyk] // *Bird in Flight* [Electronic source]. – February 21, 2019. – Retrieved from: https://birdinflight.com/ru/pochemu_eto_shedevr/20190208-chepelik.html?utm_source=push&utm_medium=chepelik&fbclid=IwAR28PyuW4yI-0OANitSs-FTnC3BPlHSOrOrON0E9_WeEZzVMECHxe3xy6jo [In Russian]

the tragic one, which Ukraine experienced in the 20th century. After all, each of us became a Fortinbras in the new millennium, responsible for both the daily creation of future history and the continuity of its recording in the chronicle.

In The Fortinbras Chronicles, the artist rolls out a spectrum of literal and metaphorical violence against the woman before the audience, and the film shows that the violence is a product of history, derived from years of totalitarian brutality and submission. The body in the film is both a political body and a cultural one. Tormenting it becomes the most effective means of weakening the self-reflection of a people, its ability to make sense of its own history, and as a result, it gradually brings about "elimination of those people from memory of historical civilization."[15]

Zabuzhko's essays and Chepelyk's film have in common the process of naming and defining the nation after the collapse of the Soviet Union: post-communist, post-totalitarian, post-colonial, and post-Chernobyl. The process of naming is identical to the search for national identity that was going on in the first years after independence and became a fixation not only for Ukrainian intellectuals but also for political populists. Such categorization forms film imagery of Chepelyk's work. The director displays images of the State in its post-situations. An example of this is the gender-mutated self-identification of the Ukrainian woman at the turn of the century, which is an allusion to the post-nuclear catastrophic designation of the nation itself.[16]

In addition to the script's outline, the ideological position and the imagery, Chepelyk borrows from Zabuzhko's early essays hypertrophied poetization that is inherent in the Ukrainian literature as opposed to the Soviet one. When watching the film, it is difficult to determine what images are primary ones, whether it is the off-screen text that comments on the imagery, or the film images that illustrate Zabuzhko's text. Characteristically, the writer's style, which is full of complex constructions, rich in descriptiveness, and emotionality, and excessively metaphoric, is reflected in Chepelyk's film through quoting from the aesthetics of the Ukrainian poetic cinema. The imagery of Zabuzhko and Chepelyk is oversaturated with naturalism and metaphors of suffering, doom, and tragedy. The literary vestiges of the martyrdom tradition have survived in the curricula of Ukrainian schools. As a result, the piece that was intended to debunk the image of the "sister-breadbasket" in the Ukrainian literature of the post-independence period only confirms, when seen by our contemporaries, the continuing fashion for martyrdom and sentimental ruralism in the corpus of Ukrainian intellectual thought in the late Soviet and early post-independence periods.[17]

This recurrence also reveals another problem for the modern viewer — the same "forgetting of the trauma" that was emphasized by Oksana Zabuzhko and Solomiia Pavlychko in their texts, and Oksana Chepelyk in her film. "We remember the past not as it really was, but as we saw it."[18] Chroniclers of the 20th century remember history through their own life stories. Composed in search of finding a compromise with the past, a chronicle, when seen through the subjective optics of individual chroniclers, is dangerous because of its fragmented and biased view of one's own history. After all, it is precisely the inability to fully comprehend and cope with one's own past that leads to historical recurrence.

Documentary photo of the filming process. The author of the photo is unknown. Photo courtesy of Oksana Chepelyk

15 A quote from Oksana Zabuzhko's *The Fortinbras Chronicles* (1999), read out in Oksana Chepelyk's film.

16 Hundorova, Tamara. "Post-Chornobyl. Katastrofizm yak nova natsionalna ideia" [Post-Chernobyl: Catastrophe as a New National Idea]. – Retrieved from: https://life.pravda.com.ua/columns/2012/04/26/101231/ [In Ukrainian]

17 Pavlychko, Solomiia. "Does Ukrainian Literary Studies Need a Feminist School?" / *Feminizm* [Feminism] (A collection of articles, ed. by Vira Ageyeva). – Kyiv: Vydavnytstvo Solomiii Pavlychko "Osnovy," 2002. – P. 19-26. [In Ukrainian]

18 Zabuzhko, Oksana. Khroniky vid Fortinbrasa. *Vybrana eseiistyka 90-kh* [The Fortinbras Chronicles. Selected Essays of the 1990s]. – Kyiv: Fakt, 1999. – P. 77. [In Ukrainian]

Alevtina Kakhidze. Only for Men, or, My Beloved, Appear in the Mirror

VALERIIA SCHILLER

The Ukrainian artist Alevtina Kakhidze has created a body of work on feminist themes, including the 2006 performance *Only for Men, or, My Beloved, Appear in the Mirror.*[1] According to the critic Tamara Zlobina, this performance was the first Ukrainian feminist artistic gesture since it was the first to consciously proclaim its feminist theme.[2] During the performance, Kakhidze sat for several hours in a gallery room on a chair opposite the large mirror, with the inscription “Only for Men, or, My Beloved, Appear in the Mirror” placed above it.

1 The performance took place at the Center for Contemporary Art at the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy and was curated by Jerzy (Yuri) Onuch.

2 Zlobina, Tamara. “Istoriya ukrainskogo feministicheskogo iskusstva” [A History of Ukrainian Feminist Art] // *Feministskaya (art) kritytka* [Feminist (Art) Criticism]. – Kaunas: Taurapolis, 2015. – P. 323-351. [In Russian]

Documentary photo of Alevtina Kakhidze's performance Only for Men, or, My Beloved, Appear in the Mirror. 2006. Photo courtesy of the artist

Only for Men... is not only the artwork's title but also a condition that had not been announced in advance: women were banned from participating in the performance. Female employees of the Soros Center for Contemporary Art (CCA) also were not allowed to enter the room. The artist had instructed them beforehand what to do with any women who would come for the performance. Such women were offered a glass of wine while they were "waiting for their companion."[3] When a man came into the room, a reflection of his shape immediately appeared in the mirror, marking him as a potential bridegroom of the artist.

The starting point of this work was the Russian artist Karl Bryullov's painting *Svetlana Telling Her Fortune* (1836), as well as a call-out to Slavic traditions of fortune-telling and other rituals used by unmarried girls in their quest to bring an imaginary groom into the life of a marriageable girl. The performance was expected to call to life local history and tradition allusions that emerged from the unconscious collective memory of male Ukrainian visitors. Would this artwork function properly without that inscription that directly referred to the fortune-telling story, or in some other context? A year before the performance at CCA, that is, in 2005, Kakhidze created a prototype of this artwork called *Come, My Beloved, and Dine with Me,* which was performed in Ljubljana, Slovenia (also curated by Jerzy (Yuri) Onuch).[4] It had the appearance of installation and consisted of two parts: the first one was a long room with mystical inscriptions "Come, My Beloved, and Dine with Me" on its walls, while the second part was a room with a mirror and walls painted black.

In her 2006 performance, Kakhidze used the method of setting up a confrontation between the public and the private. The artist deliberately projected the intimate experience of fortune-telling into the public space of the gallery. In the article *The Personal Is Political* (1969), American feminist Carol Hanisch wrote that all personal problems are actually political and that there are no personal solutions, but only collective action for a collective solution.[5] Even though a nominal common space of the majority, that is, the space of an average white heterosexual dominant man, does exist, the woman still has to leave all her issues behind closed doors — in the nominal intimate space of her room. Hanisch wrote that during the second wave of feminism, the state recognized that some limitations of women's rights did exist, for example, in the case of wage inequality. However, no one considered the less obvious effects of their psychological oppression, which prevailed throughout history and remained well-established in the minds of most women, such as a sense of guilt over their gender, implicitly learned helplessness, or lack of the sense of independence.

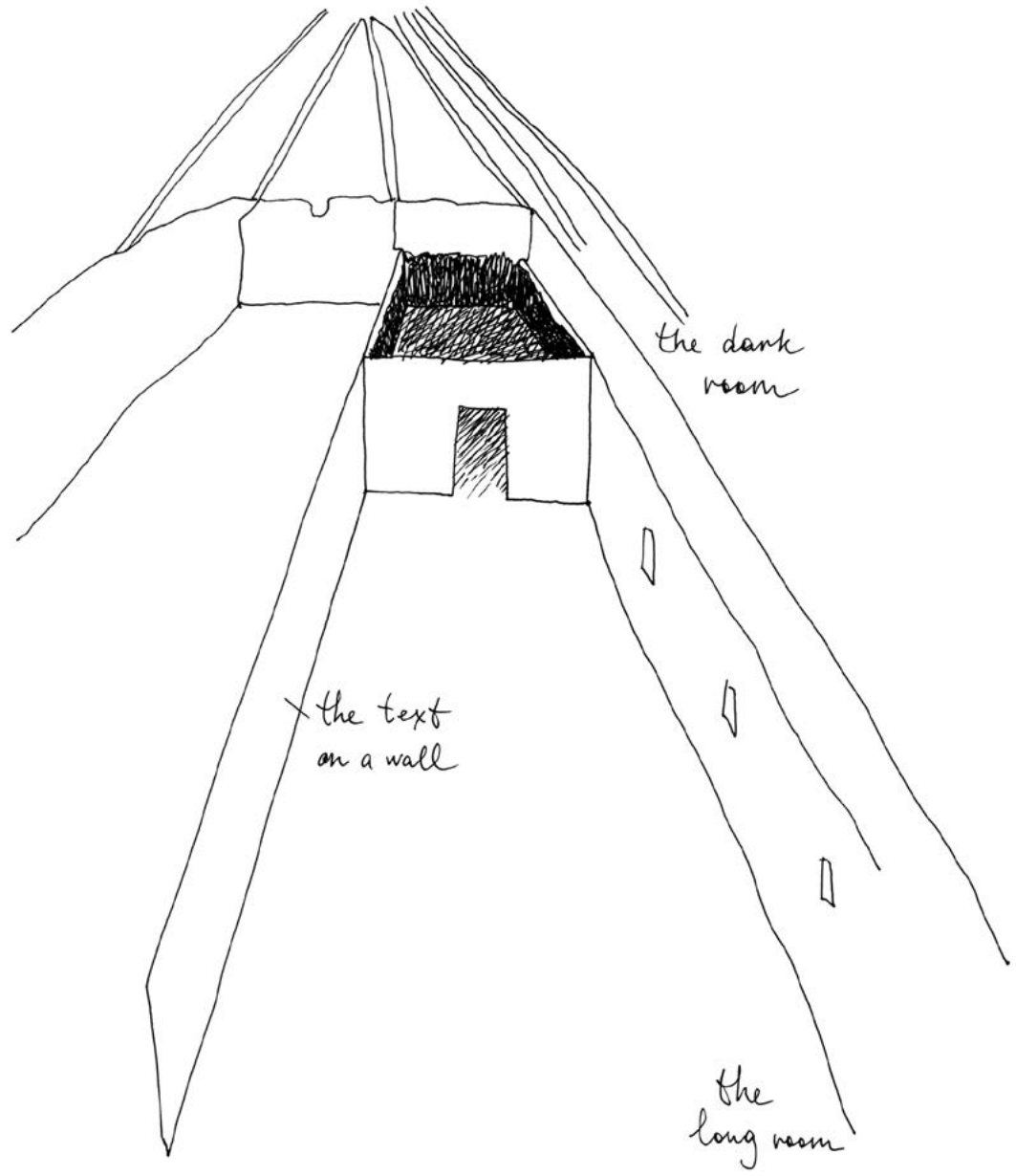
With her work *Only for Men...,* the artist deals with the problems of the institution of marriage, which involves various traditions in different cultures. In feminism, marriage is seen as an institution that has deprived women of liberty for centuries and has put an additional burden on women, besides paid work. In socialist and Marxist feminism, marriage, along with prostitution, is seen as a means of exploiting women in the framework of the patriarchal system. In his work *The Origin of Family, Private Property, and the State,* Friedrich Engels wrote: "The modern individual family is founded on the open or concealed domestic slavery of the wife. [...] Within the family he [the husband] is the bourgeois, and the wife represents the proletariat."[6]

3 From the personal archive of Alevtina Kakhidze.

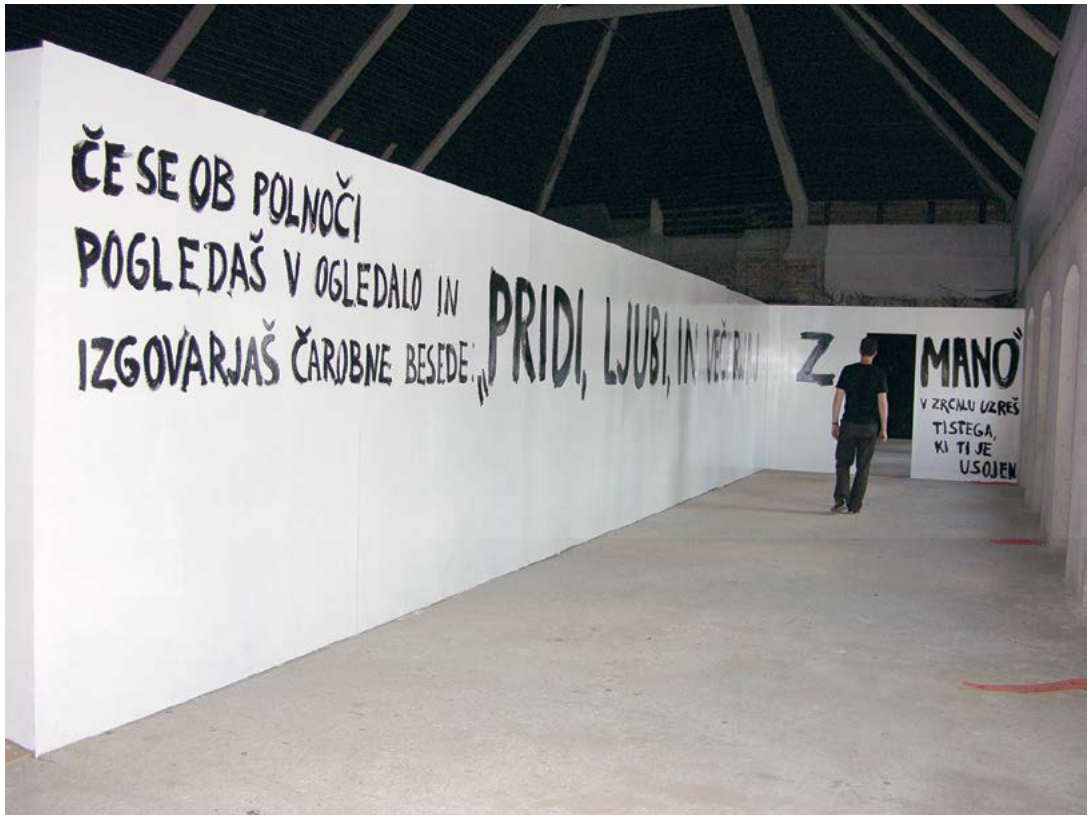
4 The wording of "Come, My Beloved and Dine with Me" is similar to "My Beloved, Appear in the Mirror."

5 Hanisch, Carol. "The Personal Is Political" [Electronic resource]. – 2006. – Retrieved from: https://webhome.cs.uvic.ca/~mserra/AttachedFiles/PersonalPolitical.pdf

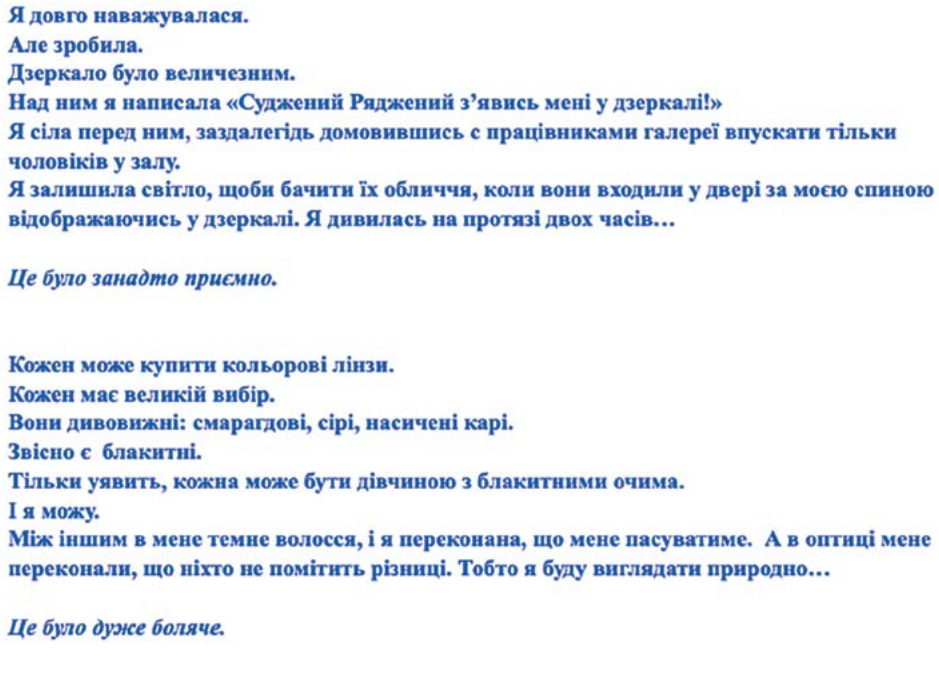
6 Engels, Friedrich. *Proiskhozhdeniye semyi, chastnoy sobstvennosti i gosudarstva* [The Origin of Family, Private Property, and the State].– Moscow: Politizdat, 1986. [In Russian] Quoted here after the English translation : Engels, Friedrich. *The Origin of Family, Private Property, and the State*



Study for Come, My Beloved and Dine with Me.
Photo courtesy of Alevtina Kakhidze



Documentary photo of Alevtina Kakhidze's performance
Only For Men, or, My Beloved, Appear in the Mirror. 2006.
Photo courtesy of the artist



Я довго наважувалася.
Але зробила.
Дзеркало було величезним.
Над ним я написала «Суджений Ряджений з'явись мені у дзеркалі!»
Я сіла перед ним, заздалегідь домовившись с працівниками галереї впускати тільки чоловіків у залу.
Я залишила світло, щоби бачити їх обличчя, коли вони входили у двері за моєю спиною відображаючись у дзеркалі. Я дивилась на протязі двох часів…

Це було занадто приємно.

Кожен може купити кольорові лінзи.
Кожен має великій вибір.
Вони дивовижні: смарагдові, сірі, насичені карі.
Звісно є блакитні.
Тільки уявить, кожна може бути дівчиною з блакитними очима.
І я можу.
Між іншим в мене темне волосся, і я переконана, що мене пасуватиме. А в оптиці мене переконали, що ніхто не помітить різниці. Тобто я буду виглядати природно…

Це було дуже боляче.

Materials for the project I Can Be a Girl with Blue Eyes (2005).
Photo courtesy of Alevtina Kakhidze

The artist, who in her creative work paid so much attention to a woman's desperate desire to marry, was married herself at the time. However, Kakhidze interpreted her CCA project as follows: "It is not about my personal problems (I was married and satisfied with my marriage during the performance) and not about Slavic folklore, which makes up no more than 5 percent of my project, and the remaining 95 percent is pure irony in the name of feminist discourse. And my feminist stance was demonstrated with such ease in this project that feminism haters did not even give a thought to this component. They were too emotional."[7]

Another topic that Kakhidze addresses in her work concerns the traditionally established social roles of women and men in the artistic milieu. The artist views men as players who are usually able to collect artworks or enjoy looking at a nude female model. But in the performance, due to the constant change of gender roles, they get confused. Kakhidze "plays" with the notions of objecthood and subjecthood: a woman is depicted in a rectangle, which is common in the gallery space, but this time the rectangle in question is not a painting but a mirror. She is used to being an object of contemplation, but at the same time, she is the project's creator who owns and controls the situation.

Zlobina noted that, "looking at viewers in the mirror, she [Kakhidze] laughs at those who unexpectedly find themselves in a situation where a thing (a work of art, a woman) looks and 'chooses' for itself, thus destroying the age-old exclusive male right to look, act and dominate."[8]

Only for Men... can be seen as an example of the use of the subversive affirmation (redundant statement) method, that is, criticism through hyperbolized assertion.[9] Kakhidze absurdizes the situation and touches on the topic of the exclusion policies by barring all women from entering the room. Some radical currents of feminism use strategies that create spaces with limited access to discussions for cisgender gender-normative men, motivating it by the fact they have always had a great many venues to express their opinions. This policy has always met with furious criticism and sometimes is read as an attempt to use and continue the same policy of exclusion from the discursive field that has plagued women for centuries. In her deliberately feminist work, Kakhidze removes women from the picture for the purpose of intentionally ridiculing the exclusion policies.

The paradox is that all groups become oppressed during the performance: women who are excluded from the public field and bought off with wine, men who become objectified at the same time, and the artist, who now has the ability to contemplate and choose, remains at the same time both a subject and an object. Her attired image is as much reflected in the mirror as the figures of hypothetical "bridegrooms". Kakhidze continued her feminist discourse in her subsequent works. One of them is the work *I Can Be a Girl with Blue Eyes* (2005), which was first presented at the Arsenal Gallery (Białystok, Poland).[10]

[Electronic resource]. – Retrieved from: https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/origin_family.pdf

7 From the personal archive of Alevtina Kakhidze.

8 Zlobina, Tamara. "Maskarad zhinochnosty yak uspishna khudozhnia stratehiia" [Masquerade of Womanhood as a Successful Artistic Strategy] // *Krytyka*. –January–February 2011 – No. 1-2. – P. 23-24. [In Ukrainian]

9 Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek defines subversive affirmation as radical "supreme identification." See: Žižek, Slavoj. "Why are Laibach and NSK not Fascists?" [Electronic resource]. – 1993. – Retrieved from: https://deterritorium.wordpress.com/2017/08/20/why-are-laibach-and-nsk-not-fascists-by-slavoj-zizek-1993/

10 *I Can Be a Girl with Blue Eyes* is a two-channel slow motion video depicting the daily process of putting contact lenses on the eyes' cornea. Instead of transparent corrective lenses, the artist chose colored bright-blue lenses. Thus, Kakhidze addressed the issue of constructing national identity (the author grew up in a Georgian-Ukrainian family) and conventional beauty standards.

Alevtina Kakhidze. 44. 2018. Video, directing, camera work, editing: Kateryna Gornostai and Nikon Romanchenko. Shown as displayed at the exhibition “A Space of One’s Own”. Photo by Maksym Bilousov

While in *Only for Men…* the choice concerns such an abstract category as “fortune,” Kakhidze constructs her own appearance in *I Can Be a Girl with Blue Eyes*. In both projects, the artist assumes the responsibility of constructing her own identity and reserves the choice for herself.

These projects were preceded by Kakhidze’s 2003 work *My Husband’s Eyes Are Like Those of Jeanne Samary,* which consisted of two images: a fragment of a photo portraying the artist’s husband Volodymyr Babiuk and a fragment of a reproduction of Auguste Renoir’s work *Portrait of the Actress Jeanne Samary*. As the artist herself says, she unconsciously created a feminist work, ironically portraying not the classic perspective of a male artist looking on a female model, but the other way around. Criticism of a purely masculine view of art history also can be tracked here.[11] In another feminist work, *44* (2018), Kakhidze again touches on the topic of female victimhood, which this time evolves into reproductive violence that is sustained through tools of psychological pressure such as dogmas and the widespread use of social clichés. In the video, the artist says “No,” as if answering the question “Do you have children?” Sometimes the artist responds with sadness, sometimes cheerfully and furiously, sometimes ashamedly, sometimes offensively, and sometimes proudly. However, this question is always disturbing and imbues her with additional emotions: a woman is always forced to justify her choice.

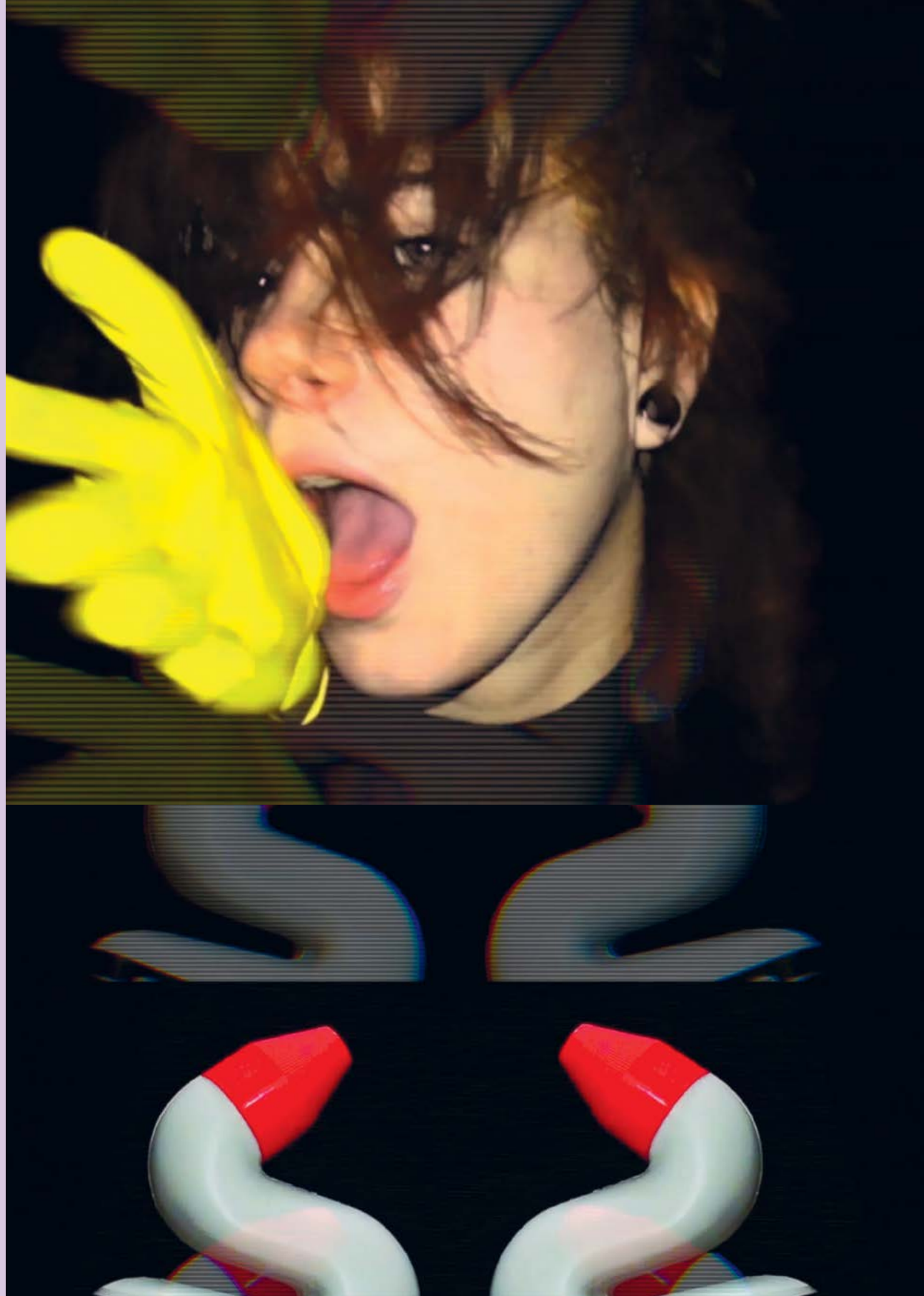
The performance *Only for Men, or, My Beloved, Appear in the Mirror* marked almost the first time that feminist themes were openly discussed in Ukrainian contemporary art, and it did so in a non-violent, non-aggressive manner, gracefully revealing social injustice. In this work, Alevtina Kakhidze redefines the boundaries of her intimate world, reappropriates the right to subjectivity, and expands her own space. Kakhidze remains consistent and true to herself throughout her oeuvre. Her works are characterized by the intimacy that finds a public outlet. The artist finds refuge in her art, honestly and frankly sharing all the spiritual vexations, newfound beauty, and pain with the world.

11 Kakhidze, Alevtina. “Glaza moyego muzha kak u Zhanny Samari” [My Husband’s Eyes Are Like Those of Jeanne Samary]. [Electronic resource]. – 2010. – Retrieved from: https://truealevtina.livejournal.com/21881.html

Alina Kleytman. Super A

KATERYNA IAKOVLENKO

A cycle of short video works by Alina Kleytman, known under the general title *Super A* (*Nails* (2013), *Cleaning* (2014), *Super A* (2015), and others), ironically tells the story of a modern woman. The artist undermines all possible stereotypes about women, their beauty, sexuality, leisure, and everyday life, relying on her keen sense of time and the dominant aggressive visual culture.



Stills from the video Cleaning.
Photo courtesy of the artist

The artist does not use her work to promote feminism as an ideological and theoretical basis.[1] She seeks to broaden the scope of feminism by discussing also other socio-economic problems related to the image and living conditions of the post-Soviet woman. Kleytman's art is thoroughly performative, allowing the creator to embrace her chosen roles and experience them. Often simplifying and sometimes vulgarizing her images, Kleytman mimics the precarious glossy advertising world with its notion of the perfect woman capable of being a "super-lover" and a good housewife at the same time. *Super A* is like a comic book superheroine, endowed with superpowers.

In her videos, Kleytman addresses typical themes of the feminist discourse — cleaning and household management, critique of the notions of beauty and sexuality. Kleytman shows the pathos of the "invisible" household work in the video *Cleaning*.[2] It uses music from Igor Stravinsky's ballet *The Rite of Spring* (1913) as a refrain accompanying the video of cleaning agents.[3] Kleytman's household work, just like the monotonous painting of nails in the video Nails or stroking her own buttocks in *Super A*, becomes, in fact, a symbolic pagan ritual. In this sense, *The Rite of Spring* only emphasizes this archaic nature of the video. When creating the ballet, Stravinsky drew inspiration from a pagan ritual he had seen in a dream: wise elders look on the dance of a girl who is intended to be sacrificed to the god of spring.[4]

Critics berated Stravinsky precisely for turning to paganism and imagery of bygone days in his work, but the composer himself considered his ballet a universal work that absorbed features of local and national traditions. Today, Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* is interpreted as a breakthrough into a new sound reality, where, according to the researcher Aleksandr Demchenko, the origins of the historical period in which we still live were recorded.[5] But the most unexpected and unique feature of *The Rite of Spring*, according to Demchenko, is the magic that manifests its peculiar nature through music.[6] In fact, what Kleytman shows in the video *Cleaning* has the same effect. The artist draws on a generalized archaic image of a woman which she modifies and displays in her video through simple visual techniques. Every movement she makes with a rag is a dance combination that makes Kleytman's performative practice resemble Stravinsky's ballet.

Analyzing traditional societies, Maria Mayerchyk noted that "the woman is not only a subject but also an object of a ritual, we can observe both the activity of women in the ritual and the reverse effect of the ritual on the woman."[7] Meanwhile, the researcher Anna Mariia Basuri Ziuzina emphasizes the central role of women in archaic societies.[8] According to her, when new religious traditions form in such societies, it is precisely women who exercise power and hold important positions. In the Ukrainian tradition,

1 Molyar, Yevheniia. "Povilne vytyskannia" [A Slow Squeeze] // *KORYDOR*. – September 19, 2013. – [Electronic resource]. – Retrieved from: http://old.korydor.in.ua/interviews/1463-povilne-vytyskannia-alina [In Ukrainian]

2 The work includes inadvertent references to feminist works that have already entered anthologies, in particular to Martha Rosler's *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975).

3 The selection of the Toilet Duck brand symbolically refers to the advertising culture that has developed since the late 1990s.

4 Quoted after: Mizyurkina, O.V. "Ritualnost v balete I. Stravinskogo "Vesna svyashchennaya": sinesteticheskiy aspekt" [Ritualism in Igor Stravinsky's Ballet *The Rite of Spring:* A Synesthetic Aspect] // *Yuzhno-Rossiyskiy muzykalny almanakh*. – 2017. – P. 42-47. [Electronic resource].– Retrieved from: https://cyberleninka.ru/article/v/ritualnost-v-balete-i-stravinskogo-vesna-svyaschennaya-sinesteticheskiy-aspekt [In Russian]

5 Demchenko, Aleksander. "U istokov XX veka" [At the Origins of the 20th Century] // *Khudozhestvenny mir muzykalnogo proizvedeniya*. – 2013. – No. 2 (13). – P. 230-234. [In Russian]

6 Ibid.

7 Mayerchyk, Mariia. *Rytual i tilo: strukturno-semantychnyi analiz obriadiv rodynnoho tsyklu* [The Ritual and Body: A Structural-Semantic Analysis of Family-Cycle Rites]. – Kyiv: Krytyka, 2011. – P. 70. [In Ukrainian]

8 Basuri Ziuzina, Anna Mariia. "Gender v relihiieznavstvi: zakhidnyi dosvid ta ukraiinski realii" [Gender in Religious Studies: Western Experience and Ukrainian Reality] // *Gendernyi zhurnal "Ya"*. – 2017. – No. 2 (43). – P. 2-5. [In Ukrainian]

Still from the video Nails.
Photo courtesy of the artist

Still from the video Super A.
Photo courtesy of the artist

Stills from the video Super A.
Photo courtesy of the artist

this is emphasized by the saying "The husband is the head, and the wife is the neck, so the head looks where the neck turns." The woman as depicted in the work of Kleytman is such a chthonic, decisive and powerful being. Commenting on her characters, the artist confessed that her heroines are born when she absorbs the "clouds of social expectations" and fulfills them. "Living these expectations to the fullest, I outgrow them and move myself to a critical distance, when I take a detached look at them and transform them into art [...] Super Alina embodies a set of expectations imposed on a woman. I am talking about a sexy woman, a woman as a representative accessory of a man, a woman as a housewife, a woman as an unapproachable-capricious-bitch, or a woman as a heroine who will enter the burning house and smuggle a few bucks through customs in her underwear," Kleytman commented.[9]

Thus, the female image in Kleytman's video combines all possible models of constructing a woman's gender identity in contemporary Ukraine. She placed in the body of her heroine both a post-Soviet woman with her economic woes and a load of household chores and a "new" sexy and relaxed bitch who grew up in a culture of glossy magazines and glamorous "perfect" images. The post-Soviet reality was closely intertwined with the tickling experience of the "rich" 2000s when a woman perceived her body as an investment in her own economic stability and a guarantee of a "better lot in life."
The desire to get married as soon as possible and invest in the family instead of achieving one's own ambitions is usually a marker of archaic, economically and culturally backward countries. For example, according to the data presented at the World Economic Forum 2011, the average age of marriage in Ukraine was 23 years.[10] Alina Kleytman was more or less of that age when creating her work.

The magic that Demchenko emphasized as he criticized Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* is literally represented in Kleytman's work as healing and unconventional medicine techniques. Her "wonder buttocks" become an object of desire in *Super A* video not for sexual reasons, but because they are claimed to heal and treat any problems (manic psychoses, cystitis, cellulitis, and even AIDS) — it is enough to bring the sore spot in contact with this miraculous part of the heroine's body.
The French writer Jean-Luc Hennig writes in his book *The Rear View* that between 1850 and 1914, the buttocks only bathed as if they had no other worries, and when the "bathing season" ended, they went to bed that had been destined to become their lot since time immemorial.[11]
Such a sexist remark contains the entire story of the female image in art as seen through the eyes of men. However, Kleytman's wonder buttocks come from a different tradition: her chosen image is a reflection of folk customs.[12] The researcher of the body and ritual in the Ukrainian rites of the family cycle Mariia Mayerchyk emphasized that the body ritual was "significant, important, and real" within the framework of traditional culture.[13]

Given her use of colorful, aggressive, and provocative images, Kleytman's oeuvre can be viewed in the framework of object-oriented feminism. With her images, the artist, on the one hand, emphasizes stereotypes and objectifies the woman. On the other hand, she uses her own objectification as an artistic strategy.

9 "Novoye imya: neistovaya khudozhnitsa Alina Kleytman" [A New Name: The Furious Artist Alina Kleytman] // *Buro 24/7*. – May 31, 2017. [Electronic resource]. – Retrieved from: https://www.buro247.ua/culture/arts/new-name-alina-kleytman.html [In Russian]
10 Horbach, Denys. "Na zhenskom dne" [At the Female Day (Bottom of Life)] // *Spilne*. – March 7, 2011. – [Electronic resource].– Retrieved from: https://commons.com.ua/en/na-zhenskom-dne [In Russian]
11 Hennig, Jean-Luc. *Kratkaya istoriya popy* [A Brief History of the Bottom]. – Moscow: KoLibri, 2006. – P. 25. [In Russian] (Published in English as: Hennig, Jean-Luc. The Rear View. – New York: Random House USA, 1997).
12 More details are available here: Mayerchyk, Mariia. *Rytual i tilo: strukturno-semantychnyi analiz obriadiv rodynnoho tsyklu* [The Ritual and Body: A Structural-Semantic Analysis of Family-Cycle Rites]. – Kyiv: Krytyka, 2011. [In Ukrainian]
13 Ibid. – P. 73.

The Loneliest Body in the World

KATERYNA MISHCHENKO

STRAIGHT AGAINST THE WALL

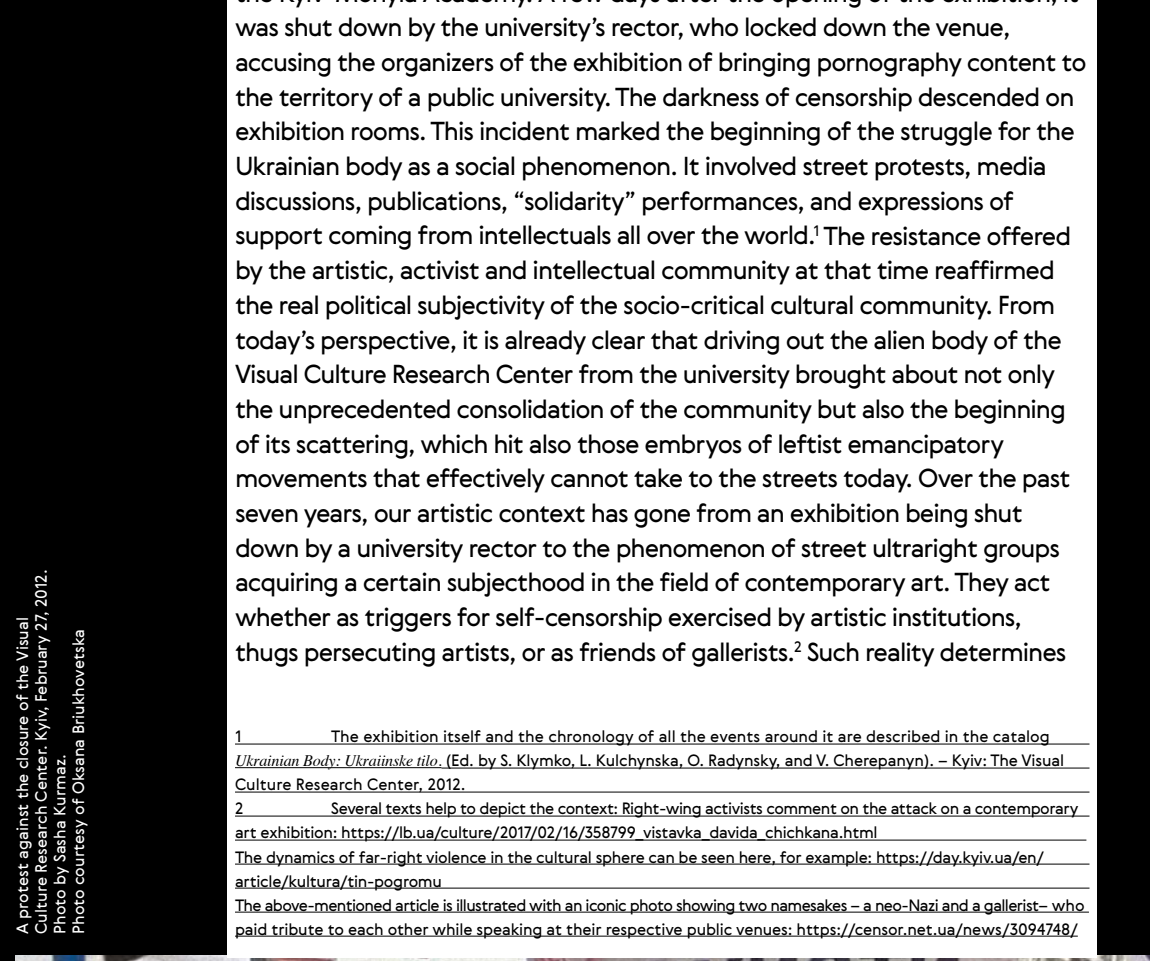
Vova Vorotniov's *Blue Panel* shows a white stripe and a blue stripe stretching out into eternity. However, right in front of the viewer, there is a dead end, a wall. This ambivalence makes the body move in a specific way, namely, to wander. The image created by Vorotniov is inspired by the design of a Soviet corridor, which could be found in a hospital, at the entrance of an apartment building, or at the police station. It is in these corridors, in the transit area between the private and the public, that post-Soviet individuals still roam. They read mural paintings that have not yet been whitewashed and imagine tales from chronicles, densely covered with the enamel of some non-white color, which ought to protect the bottom part of the wall from the unwanted traces of all the past passers-by. The panel alludes to untold stories and serves as a biopolitical boundary between individuals and their social experience.

Vorotniov's work was first exhibited at the 2012 "Ukrainian Body" exhibition. The exhibition was held at the Visual Culture Research Center (VCRC), one of the leading institutions in the country for critical theory and art. Through the voices of seventeen artists, the event made a comprehensive statement about contemporary social physicality. It also touched on all the issues around which the domestic conservative axis was built: (homo)sexuality, gender, and privatization of public space. At the same time, the "Ukrainian Body" aimed at dealing with a more ambitious task, to define the post-Soviet materialism. The exhibition offered a rather diverse typology of social precariousness and could well become a platform for discussing which bodies populate our everyday lives.

In 2012, the Center was a research institution operating on the premises of the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy. A few days after the opening of the exhibition, it was shut down by the university's rector, who locked down the venue, accusing the organizers of the exhibition of bringing pornography content to the territory of a public university. The darkness of censorship descended on exhibition rooms. This incident marked the beginning of the struggle for the Ukrainian body as a social phenomenon. It involved street protests, media discussions, publications, "solidarity" performances, and expressions of support coming from intellectuals all over the world.[1] The resistance offered by the artistic, activist and intellectual community at that time reaffirmed the real political subjectivity of the socio-critical cultural community. From today's perspective, it is already clear that driving out the alien body of the Visual Culture Research Center from the university brought about not only the unprecedented consolidation of the community but also the beginning of its scattering, which hit also those embryos of leftist emancipatory movements that effectively cannot take to the streets today. Over the past seven years, our artistic context has gone from an exhibition being shut down by a university rector to the phenomenon of street ultraright groups acquiring a certain subjecthood in the field of contemporary art. They act whether as triggers for self-censorship exercised by artistic institutions, thugs persecuting artists, or as friends of gallerists.[2] Such reality determines

1 The exhibition itself and the chronology of all the events around it are described in the catalog *Ukrainian Body: Ukraiinske tilo*. (Ed. by S. Klymko, L. Kulchynska, O. Radynsky, and V. Cherepanyn). – Kyiv: The Visual Culture Research Center, 2012.

2 Several texts help to depict the context: Right-wing activists comment on the attack on a contemporary art exhibition: https://lb.ua/culture/2017/02/16/358799_vistavka_davida_chichkana.html
The dynamics of far-right violence in the cultural sphere can be seen here, for example: https://day.kyiv.ua/en/article/kultura/tin-pogromu
The above-mentioned article is illustrated with an iconic photo showing two namesakes – a neo-Nazi and a gallerist– who paid tribute to each other while speaking at their respective public venues: https://censor.net.ua/news/3094748/



A protest against the closure of the Visual Culture Research Center. Kyiv, February 27, 2012.
Photo by Sasha Kurmaz.
Photo courtesy of Oksana Briukhovetska

Oksana Briukhovetska. Page from the book Body No.
Photo courtesy of the artist

the conditions currently existing for the production of contemporary art, as well as grassroots politics in Ukraine in general. Metaphorically, they could be described as the ghost of the "Ukrainian Body" event still haunting us. At the same time, the body as a phenomenon still cannot leave the striped wall.

Were we to look at today's reality as negatively defined, that is, defined by the absence in it of critical opinions on precisely the Ukrainian body, then what kind of absence is it? What does it keep saying through closed doors?

UNDERGROUND LOVERS

A library archive is now housed on the premises of the former Visual Culture Research Center's gallery. This is now a memory preservation space, but it does nothing to preserve the memory of the Centre. To establish at least some connection between then and now, one can draw a thin mnemonic line that will lead to books exhibited there: Oksana Briukhovetska's *Body No*. and Anatoly Belov's *The Most Pornographic Book in the World*. However, the usually robust materiality of the book here shows its precariousness. Briukhovetska's work is a large-format book with a single copy exhibited, and Belov's book was shown at the exhibition as a continuing project, the second part of an already finished book set. Not surprisingly, the issues raised in these works are also subject to an understatement or defocused visibility.

However, before we immerse ourselves into these books, we must become perverts. Let us engage in the perversion understood as pornography, which was what the exhibition's censors accused it of at the time. The effect of pornography is to objectify the viewer, forcing them into a kind of travesty of look — they must accept the optics offered by the works and face the ugly side of the everyday picture of the world, where various marginal beings emerge from the underground. Dealing with this, we can use the concept of coming out, which originates in English and is linked to "coming out of the closet" as performed by homosexuals.[3] However, the concept of the underground is more relevant to our social environment, because it emphasizes economic precariousness and the role of the social vertical in the production of marginality.

Let us look at the two books through perverted eyes. Oksana Briukhovetska's work, originally called *The Ukrainian Body,* portrays in a unique way Ukrainian poverty in a unique way, which is associated with homelessness, old age,

oshibka_v_sanktsiyah_rf_vmesto_lidera_s14_vnesla_v_spisok_galerista_karasya

3 See, for example: Urbach, Henry. "Skhovky, odiah, vykryttia" [Closets, Clothes, disClosure] / *Obraz, tilo, poriadok Genderni doslidzhennia v mizhdystsyplinarnomy spektri* [Image, Body, Order. Gender Studies on the Interdisciplinary Spectrum]. (Ed. by K. Mishchenko and S. Stretling). – Kyiv: Meduza, 2014. [In Ukrainian]

and alcoholism.[4] The artist worked with images that most often occur in urban space. According to her, she was prompted to work on the book by her young daughter asking questions about why people slept on the streets or rummaged in trash bins. Defamiliarizing her characters by looking at them with a child's eyes and using the aesthetics of children's literature, the artist created mixed images from two visual sets — the world of advertising and the world of street poverty. Both are intrusive to an extent: it is hard not to look at adverts because they have occupied the public space, and one is tempted not to notice poverty, despite its equally ubiquitous presence. A few photos were placed next to the book on the wall, portraying people rummaging in trash bins in search of food or any other still useable objects. Trash objects from the world of consumer excess attract and captivate the bodies of those who found themselves on the margins of society.

The artist recorded them in an intimate moment associated with the indecency of being poor. The "bodies" depicted in this book are studies on the iconography of post-Soviet misery and the religion of consumption. Even as the viewer is overwhelmed with numerous advertising spaces, the images of old and abandoned people appear in them. *Body No.* also depicts the inorganic corporeality of society, when those excluded from the social metabolism nevertheless become part of it through forced self-involvement in the "recycling" of the contents of the trash bins.[5]

Anatoly Belov's book is engaged in a peculiar dialogue with *Body No.*, where it speaks less of abandonment and more of one's immersion in virtual life. Those pages that were on display at the exhibition have become a full-fledged book called *The Most Pornographic Book in the World II*, which generally tells the story of corporeality and Internet existentialism. Here, I would make another leap into the past and focus on the first part of the book, in which the body is just beginning to be physically recognizable and salient. Belov's *The Most Pornographic Book* was collated from various pictures executed by the artist, which he later supplemented with some specially created graphics. The extreme pornography claimed in the title is linked to the radical display of the world of the author's erotic imagination. In this world, we come across pornographic scenes stolen from the video sphere, images of orgies and street violence, portraits of people who look sadly, sympathetically, or thoughtfully either at us or at the scenes from previous and subsequent pages. Some portraits are accompanied by brief confessions of the characters' own solitude.

Belov's work is disturbing. It manifests itself in a clash of homophobic and homoerotic emotions. In this sense, the artist has succeeded in conveying the sensual world of people who, having just begun to explore their homosexuality,

4 The artist's comment and online publication of the project under its old name casn be retrieved from: http://archive.prostory.net.ua/en/art/293-2010-05-11-19-32-16

5 The notion of inorganic body emerged during the first industrial revolution, and its explorers included Karl Marx, who stated that man-made objects of the natural world became part of the human body and thus its two-componentness emerged, as it became composed of an organic and an inorganic body.

Anatoly Belov. Illustration from The Most Pornographic Book in the World. 2008

feel an external condemnatory pressure that can very quickly escalate into physical violence in our context. Belov also depicts a symbolic struggle for the male body in which homoerotic masculinity risks moving away from the "soft" manifestation of acts of love and becoming part of a militaristic fantasy about violence and war.

At the time when the protests against the closure of the "Ukrainian Body" exhibition were being held in Kyiv, the artist Piotr Armianovsky, then based in Donetsk, staged a performance near the Donetsk Regional Art Museum.[6] He carved a Ukrainian coat of arms on his naked body, making his body into a field of symbolic struggle, addressed to the national question. The artist set himself in opposition to the imagined community of the nation, pointing to the concrete and real experience of his

6 Since the war's beginning, the artist has worked in Kyiv, mostly as a documentary filmmaker.

Anatoly Belov and Oksana Kazmina.
Stills from the film The Feast of Life. 2015

citizenship. The gesture of self-injury indicated protest in the face of unfair power distribution, when one could only oppose a repressive power structure with one's physical self, one's own body.

My Wounds Cry and Sing is the final song performed by Anatoly Belov in the musical *The Feast of Life*, which is his joint project with the director Oksana Kazmina.[7] The musical's story unfolds at a drug party somewhere on the outskirts of Kyiv, hosted by vampires who treat guests to narcotic substances and then feed on their hallucinations. In this story, the vampire figure is associated not only with exploitation but also with addiction and self-destruction. In a situation of festive resignation, one can hear the voice of the war generation in the dialogues about love, dreams, and beauty, even though that generation may not have realized yet its own status. *The Feast of Life* is an attempt at a temporary break with the usual way of doing things, a transgressive response to death or deaths that occurred as a result of both the massacre of protesters in Kyiv and during the war.[8] Reading this work by Belov and Kazmina as a wartime musical, one of the issues raised in it is the search for a safe place where one would be able to leave the shadow of war and avoid being drawn into the maelstrom of violence. *The Feast of Life* is an example of the fact that emancipatory milieus have retreated to the outskirts of the public sphere, if not outright underground.

However, against such a sad political background, Anatoly Belov continues to develop the aesthetic language of queer culture, in particular, in his capacity as a participant of the Human Likeness (Liudska Podoba) musical group. To see this, it is enough to hear his songs and his voice. The voice, this Other within oneself, is one of the most important mediums of emancipation in the context of Belov's oeuvre. He is currently working with Oksana Kazmina on a project called *Body Practices*, which will offer an open venue for self-articulation by those who agree to engage in conversations about exploring their own bodies.[9] This will allow the organizers to achieve the celebrated objective of "giving voice," which various human rights initiatives aim to do. Today, in the face of right-wing movements' growing desire for cultural hegemony and their direct attacks on art, the symbolic confrontation between the two bodies of war — the warrior and the artist — is growing more intense. The cult of violence and militaristic fashion is opposed by the voice of a vulnerable, sensual subject. However, despite the power of the medium, this magical sound is only possible thanks to the body inside which it is born. However, so far, the Ukrainian body stands alone in its freedom struggle, still hoping for collective solidarity that could hold out the promise of its liberation.

7 The film's teaser can be retrieved from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OFaPEHZqDjE

8 See, for example, Bataille, Georges. *Istoriya erotizma* [A History of Eroticism]. (Trans. from French by B. Skuratov, ed. by K. Golubovich and O. Timofeeva). – Moscow: Izdatelstvo Logos, Yevropeyskiye izdaniya, 2007. – P. 69-70.

9 Currently, the project has only a Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/praktykytila/

ARCHIVAL

MATERIALS

Oksana Pavlenko. 1929.
The author of the photograph is unknown.

Oksana Pavlenko. 1950s. The author of the photo is unknown.
All materials courtesy of the CSAMLA of Ukraine.
Fond 356. Opys 1. Sprava 346

Oksana Pavlenko. Date unknown.
The author of the photo is unknown.

Antonina Ivanova at work on murals. 1935.
The CSAMLA of Ukraine. Fond 355. Opys 1.
Sprava 68

Mariia Prymachenko at work.

Mariia Prymachenko

All materials courtesy of the Mariia Prymachenko's Creative Legacy Charitable Organization

Hanna Sobachko-Shostak at work.
The author of the photo is unknown.
Photo courtesy of the NMUFDA

At work on the painting Flax with her daughter Olha. 1977. The author of the photo is unknown. Photo courtesy of the artist's family

Tetiana Yablonska in the studio. Kyiv, the 1970s. The author of the photo is unknown. Photo courtesy of the artist's family

Near the studio. Kyiv, the 1970s. Photo by Ihor Palmin. Photo courtesy of the artist'sfamily

Tetiana Yablonska with her daughter Olha. Kyiv, the 1970s. Photo by Ihor Palmin. Photo courtesy of the artist's family

Tetiana Yablonska with her daughter Gayane Atayan in the studio. Kyiv, 1997. Photo courtesy of the artist's family

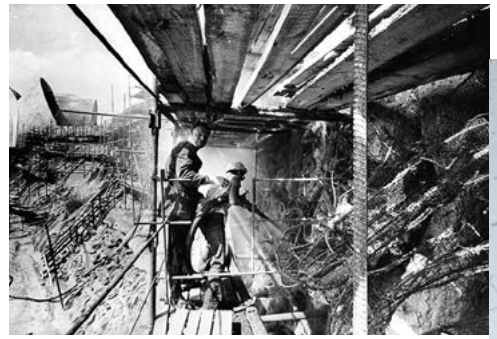
Tetiana Yablonska in the studio. Kyiv, the 1970s. Photo courtesy of the artist's family

Alla Horska, dressed as a miner, walks down a Donetsk street. The mid-1950s.
A photocopy from Oleksii Zaretsky's archive.

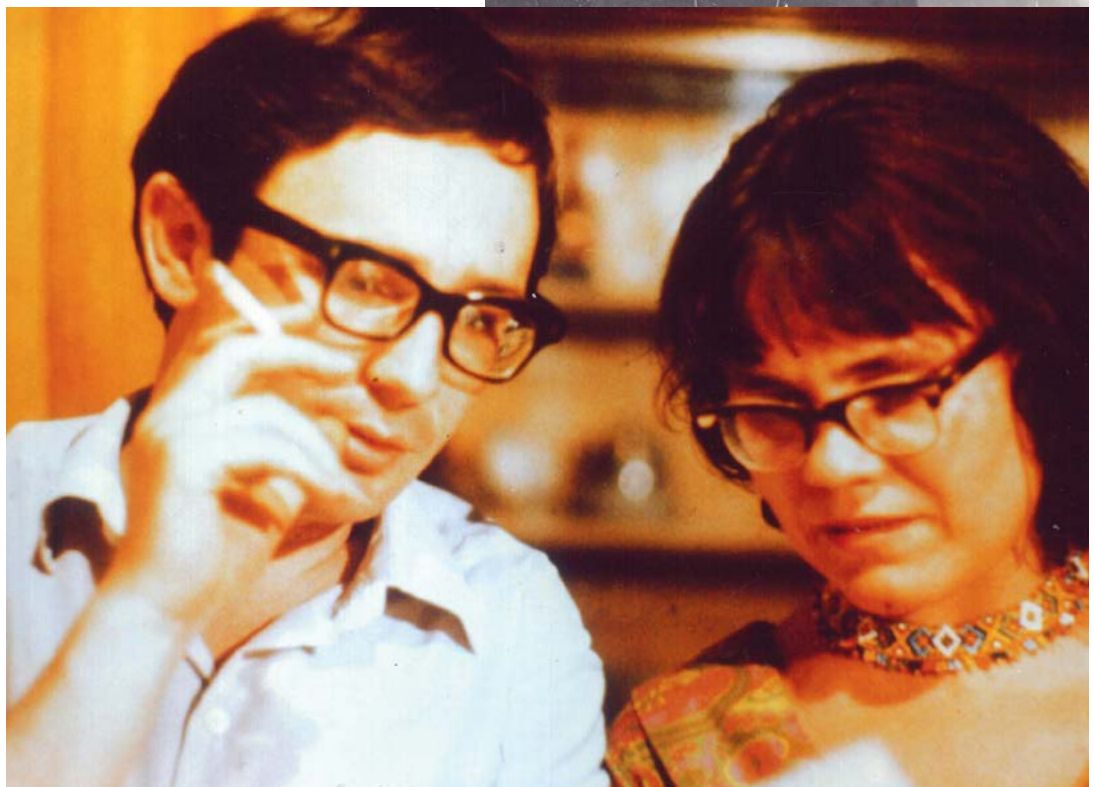
Alla Horska at work. Donetsk, 1966.
A photocopy from Oleksii Zaretsky's archive.

Nadiia Svitlychna and Alla Horska. 1967.

All materials courtesy of the Sixtiers Movement Museum,
a division of the Kyiv City History Museum



Ada Rybachuk at work on bas-reliefs of the Memory Walls. Photo courtesy of Volodymyr Melnychenko



All materials courtesy of the Sixtiers Movement Museum, a division of the Kyiv City History Museum

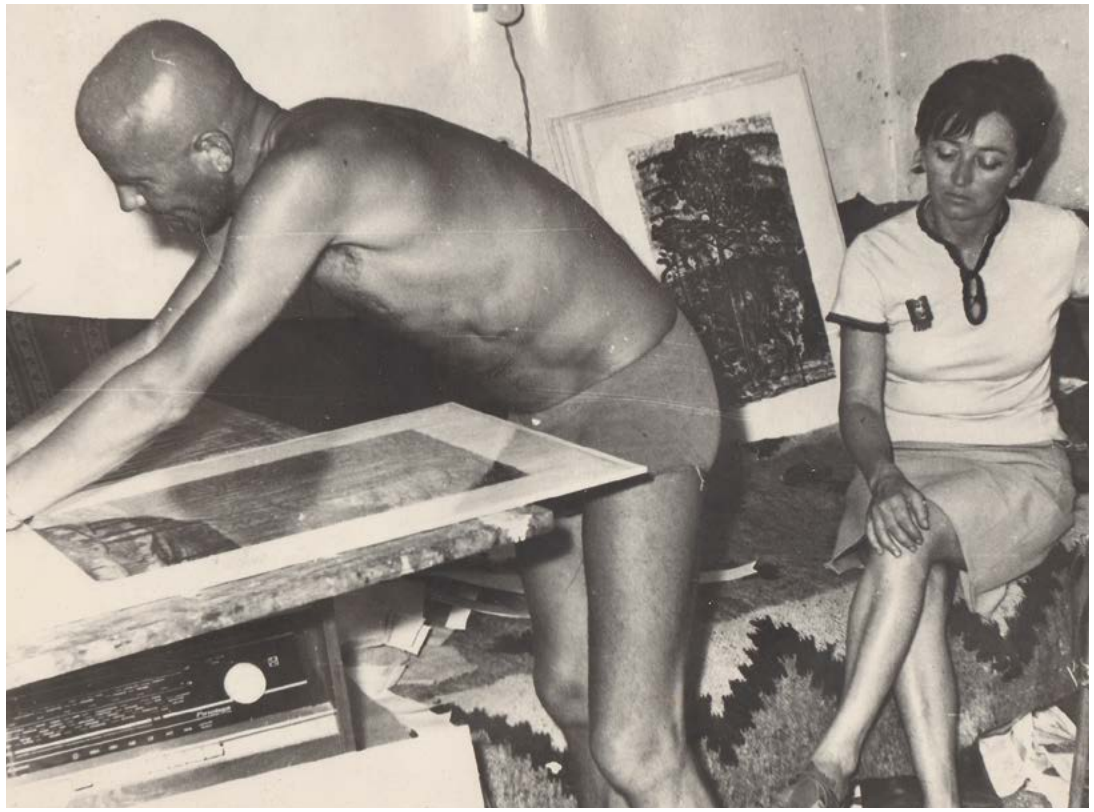
Liubov Panchenko. Year unknown

Liubov Panchenko at an exhibition in Donetsk. 1968

Liubov Panchenko at an exhibition in Donetsk. 1968

All materials courtesy of the Sixtiers Movement Museum, a division of the Kyiv City History Museum

YELYZAVETA KREMNYTSKA (1926–1978)



Pavlo Bedzir and Yelyzaveta Kremnytska in the studio apartment. Uzhhorod, 1969-1971. Photo by Oleksandr Lendiel. Photo courtesy of Kateryna Tykhonenko

LIUDMYLA (MILA) SKRYPKINA (b. 1964)

Liudmyla Skrypkina during Yuri Leiderman's performance To Beat the Wall and the Black Wife. Odesa, 1987. Photo by Yuri Leiderman. Photo courtesy of the Odesa Museum of Contemporary Art

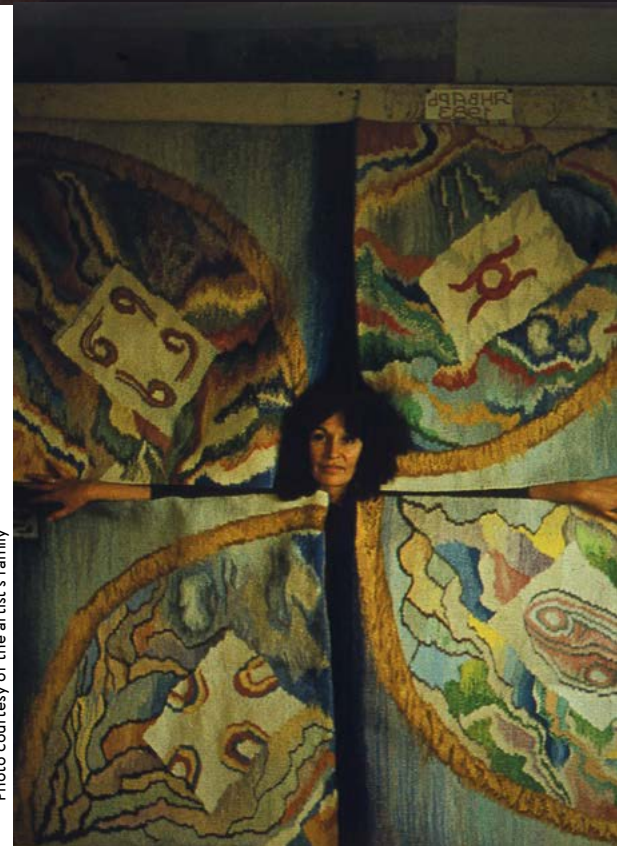
NATALIA SHEVCHENKO (b. 1982)

Natalia Shevchenko. A documentary of the Ball of Yarn work. 2013. The author of the photo is unknown. Photo courtesy of Kateryna Tykhonenko and Open Archive

Larysa Rezun-Zvezdochetova. Self-portrait. Photo taken during a solo exhibition at the Avant-Garde gallery of Natan Fedorivsky. Berlin, 1990. Photo courtesy of the artist

Larysa Rezun-Zvezdochetova in her own studio in the squat at Furmanny Lane. Moscow, 1989. The author of the photo is unknown. Photo courtesy of the artist

Marharyta Zharkova at work on a tapestry. Odesa, 1983. Photo by Pavlo Yurak. Photo courtesy of the artist's family



Marharyta Zharkova with the tapestry Seasons. Odesa, 1983. Photo courtesy of the artist's family

HALYNA ZHEHULSKA
(b. 1957)

Portrait of Halyna Zhehulska. Photo by Mykhailo Frantsuzov.
Photo courtesy of the photographer

HALYNA NELEDVA
(1938–2017)

Halyna Neledva in the studio. Kyiv, the 1980s.
The author of the photo is unknown.
Photo courtesy of Olena Ryzhykh

IRYNA NIROD
(b. 1945)

Iryna Nirod at work on Tetiana Mahar's TV film
The Glass Menagerie. Photo by Vasyl Pylypiuk.
Photo courtesy of the artist

OLENA RYZHYKH
(b. 1965)

Olena Ryzhykh during her studies
at the Tbilisi Academy of Arts. 1988.
Photo courtesy of the artist

VALERIIA TROUBINA
(b. 1966)

Valeriia Troubina at work in the courtyard of the squat on Lenina Street (now Bohdana Khmelnytskoho Street). Kyiv, the early 1990s
Photo by Dmytro Kavsan.
Photo courtesy of the photographer

LESIA ZAIATS
(b. 1965)

Lesia Zaiats at the opening of the PinchukArtCentre Center for Contemporary Art and at the "New Space" exhibition. 2006

YANA BYSTROVA
(b. 1966)

Yana Bystrova at work.
Paris, the mid-1990s.
Photo courtesy of the artist

Iryna Pap taking photos. The 1970s.
Photo by Boris Gradov. Photo courtesy
of Iryna Pap's family

Iryna Pap taking photos at the Kyiv Aviation Plant. 1962.
Photo by Boris Gradov. Photo courtesy of Iryna Pap's family

Traditional handmade greeting card from the family of photographers Iryna Pap and Boris Gradov. Photo collage by Boris Gradov. Kyiv, the 1970s. Photo courtesy of Iryna Pap's family

Kryvorivnia landscapes, Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast.
Photo by Paraska Plytka-Horytsvit. Photo courtesy
of the Kryvorivnia village community

Paraska Plytka-Horytsvit. A photo self-portrait.
Photo courtesy of the Kryvorivnia village community

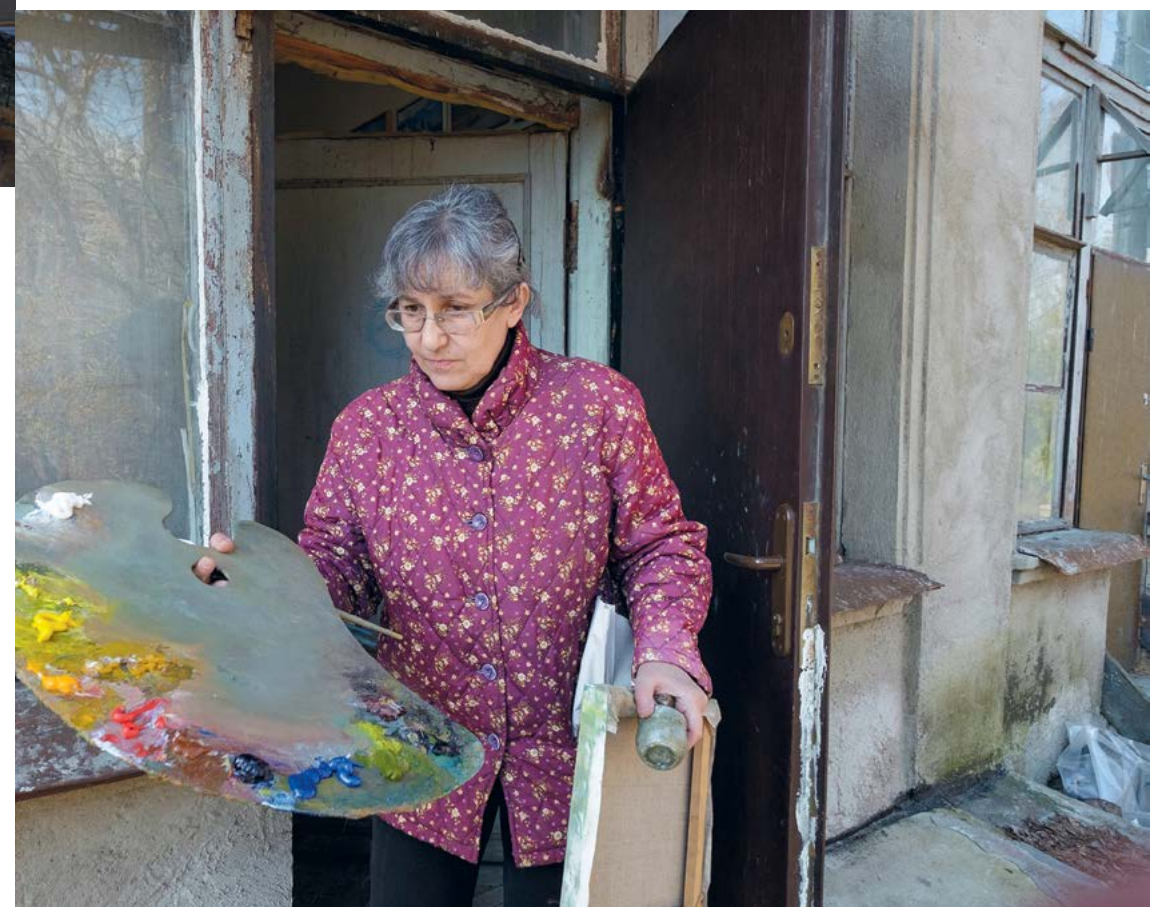
Portraits of Kryvorivnia villagers, Ivano-Frankivsk
Oblast. Photo by Paraska Plytka-Horytsvit. Photo
courtesy of the Kryvorivnia village community

Portraits of Kryvorivnia villagers, Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast.
Photo by Paraska Plytka-Horytsvit. Photo courtesy
of the Kryvorivnia village community

Photos by Kostiantyn Strilets
Text by Kateryna Iakovlenko

In her famous lecture, *A Room of One's Own,* the British writer Virginia Woolf said that the woman writer's space was limited to her own room. This space could not extend beyond the walls of their private study rooms. Similarly to writers' spaces, women artists' studios are of particular importance. These are sites where individual experiences and emotions are transformed into works aimed at the general public. However, it is not only the work itself that is important but also the method and process of creating it. Each artist possesses an individual technique and works with the materials of her choosing. This artistic process also makes female creators interesting for art researchers.

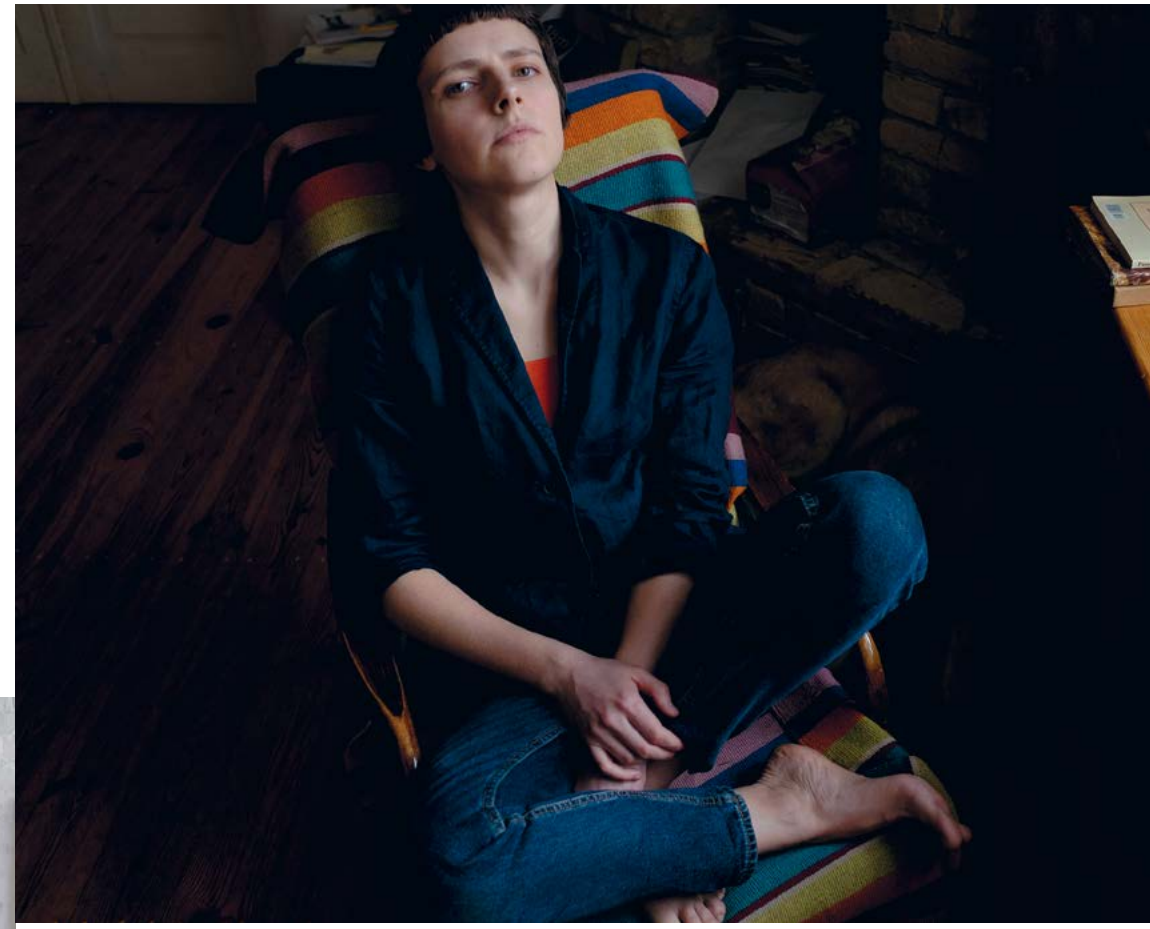
We cannot recreate women artists' "space of their own" in this project, but we will try to show how it was equipped by the creators belonging to different generations of Ukrainian art.



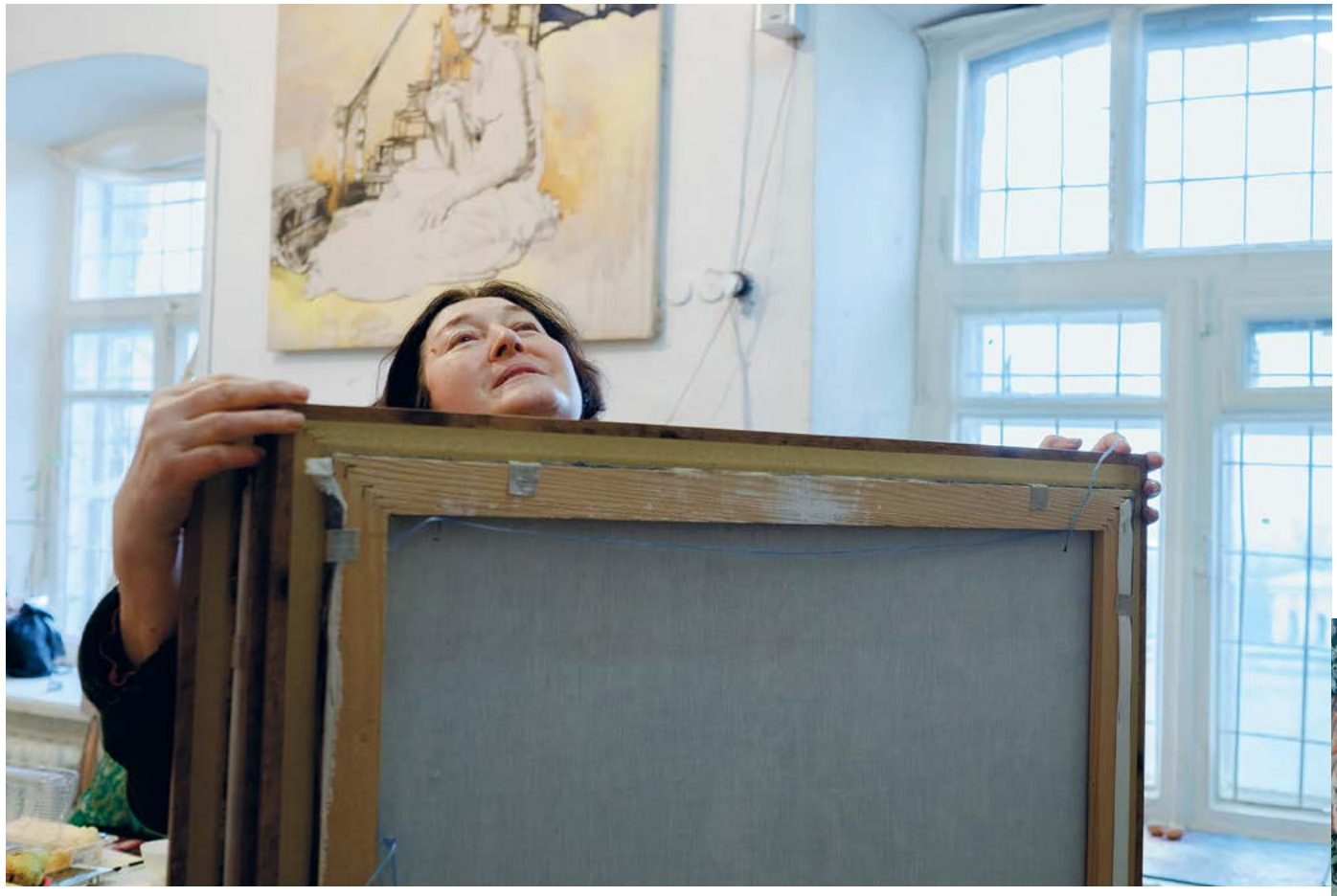
The window illuminating the workspace of Tetiana Yablonska's former studio, now occupied by her artist daughter Gayane Atayan, faces north. Here, Yablonska created her artworks, including portraits of her friends and relatives and the painting *Flax*. Everything here remains as it was during Yablonska's lifetime. The paintings hang in the same order and on the same nails that Yablonska once drove in, and even the sheaf depicted in *Flax* still decorates the room in the same way, though it is much smaller now. The white walls of the studio, once painted by the artist, still carry her handwritten texts. She wrote notes and even phone numbers of her contacts there. In such a "museified" atmosphere, one understands best what kind of a person Yablonska was.

This studio, located in the courtyard of the National Academy of Fine Arts and Architecture of Ukraine, can be rightly called a legendary place. In the 1930s, it belonged to Fedir Krychevsky (1879–1947), then, it passed into the hands of Oleksii Shovkunenko (1884–1974), and in the mid-1970s to Tetiana Yablonska. Since her demise, the Union studio has been occupied by Gayane Atayan. It is probable that the building in which the studio is located was designed by Vasyl Krychevsky (1872–1952), and his brother Fedir chose the best space for his creative work. As a "document" of the past, Krychevsky's old goldish-colored canvas stretchers are still there in the mezzanine.

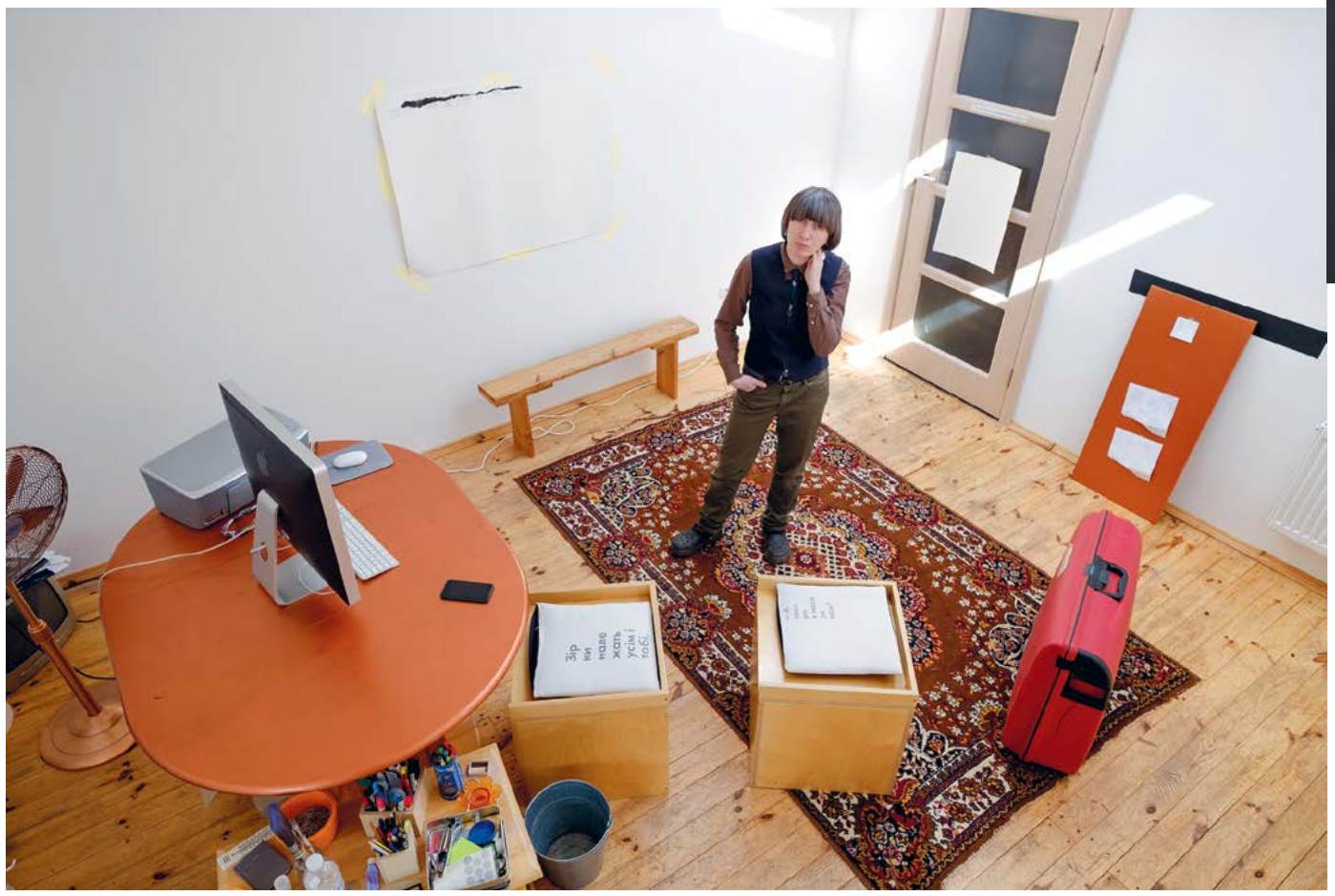
ANNA ZVYAGINTSEVA
(b. 1986)



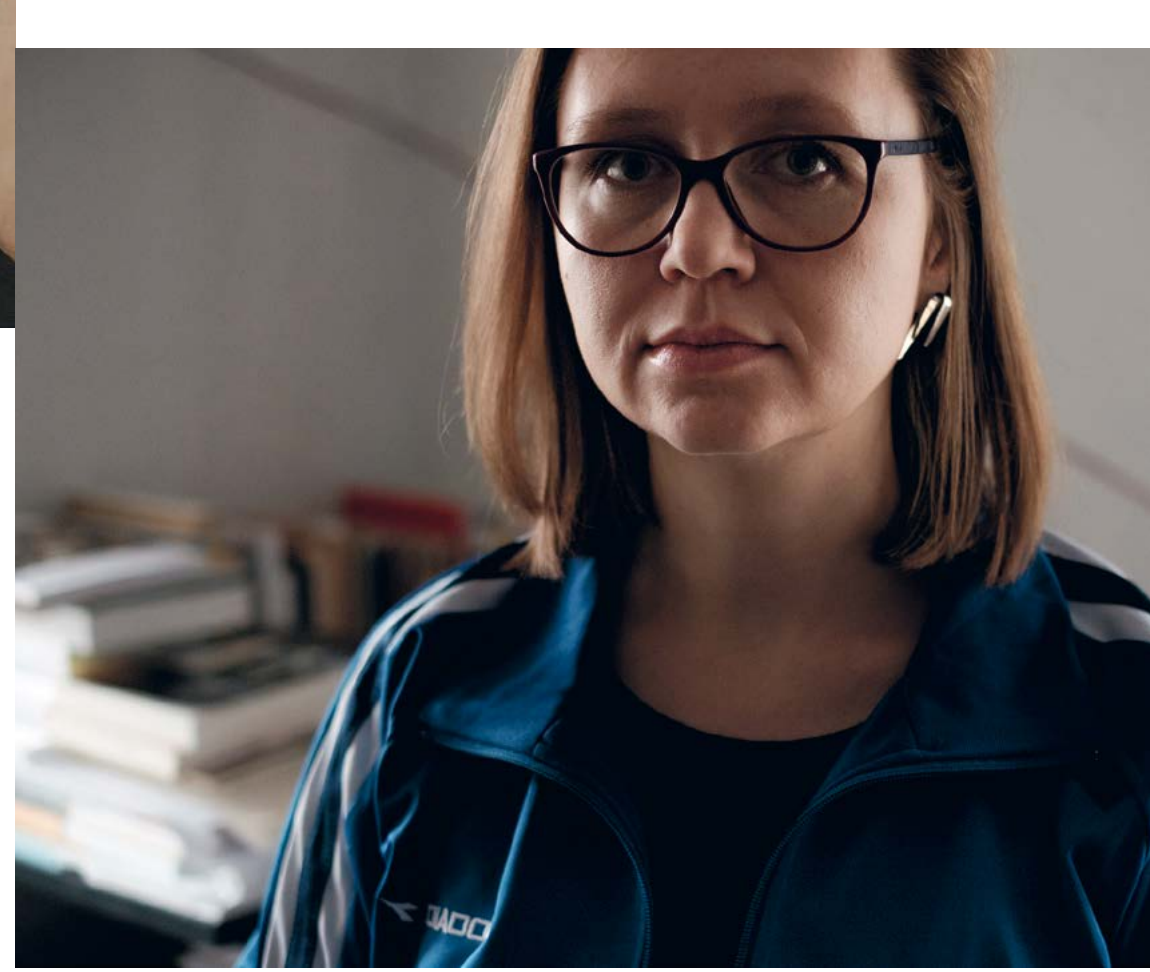
TETIANA ILLIAKHOVA
(b. 1954)



Alevtina KAKHIDZE
(b. 1973)



LADA NAKONECHNA
(b. 1981)



VLADA RALKO
(b. 1969)

MARYNA SKUGARIEVA
(b. 1962)

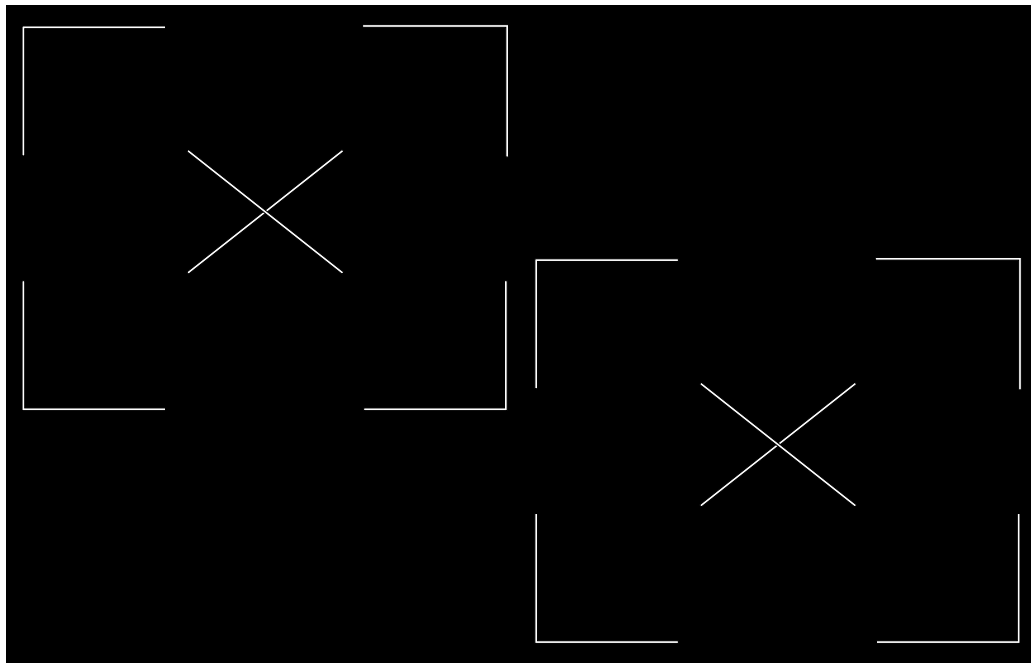
LESIA KHOMENKO
(b. 1980)

ANNA SHCHERBYNA
(b. 1988)

SUPPLEMENTS

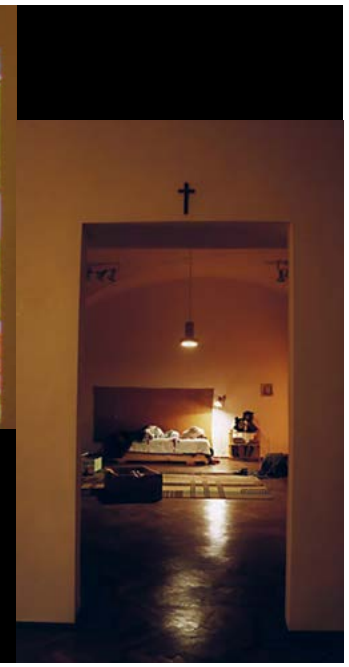
EXHIBITION LOOKING FOR CAPRICIOUS LURES

Date: 1993
Location: The Detsyma Gallery (in the lobby of the State Museum of Ethnography, Arts and Crafts; 10 Rynok Square, Lviv, Ukraine)
Curator: Yuri Sokolov
Some participants: Olha Blazhko, Zoriana Harbar, Antonina Denisiuk, Halyna Zhehulska, Oksana-Hanna Lypa, Viktoria Kovalchuk, Mariia Lichtsteiner, Hera Levytska, Tetiana Mun, Olha Milentii, Iryna Sylvestrova, Maryna Skugarieva, Tetiana Florynska.



EXHIBITION TENDERNESS

Date: May 30 – July 6, 2003
Location: The Center for Contemporary Art at NaUKMA (2 Hryhoriia Skovorody Street, Kyiv, Ukraine)
Curator: Olesia Ostrovska-Luta
Some participants: Bogna Burska, Marharyta Zinets, Alevtina Kakhidze, Nikoleta Markovic.



Some works and the general view of the exhibition "Tenderness". 1995. All photos courtesy of the Center for Contemporary Art

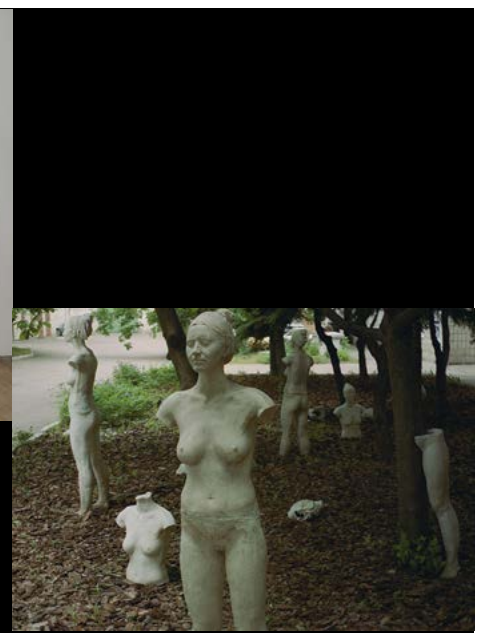
EXHIBITION THE MOUTH OF MEDUSA
Date: February 23 – March 5, 1995

Location: The Brama Center of Contemporary Art (8 Triokhsviatytelska Street, Kyiv, Ukraine)
Curator: Natalia Filonenko
Some participants: Leonid Vartyvanov, Tetiana Halochkina, Oleksandr Hnylytsky Ilya Isupov, Iryna Lastovkina, Katrin Mate-Burinde, Dmytro Orieshnikov, Viktoria Parkhomenko, Olha Petrova, Oleksandra Prakhova, Arsen Savadov and Georhii Senchenko, Maryna Skugarieva, Zoia Sokol, Valeriia Troubina, Mykola Trokh, Ilya Chichkan, Kyrylo Chichkan, Yuliia Ukader.

The general view of the exhibition "The Mouth of Medusa". All photos courtesy of Natalia Filonenko

EXHIBITION GENDER IN IZOLYATSIA: THE RIGHT TO SELF-CONSTRUCTION UNDER PATRIARCHY
Date: April 20 – June 8, 2012

Location: The Medpunkt Gallery of the IZOLYATSIA. Platform for Cultural Initiatives Foundation (3 Svitloho Shliakhu Street, Donetsk, Ukraine)
Curator: Olena Oleksandra Chervonyk
Some participants: Synchrodogs (Tania Shchehlova and Roman Noven), Roman Bodnarchuk, Kseniia Hnylytska, Zhanna Kadyrova, Alina Kleytman, Masha Kulykovska, Liubov Malikova, Viktoria Myroniuk, Lada Nakonechna, Maryna Skugarieva, Oleksii Salmanov, Lesia Khomenko, Masha Shubina.



The installation scheme and general layout of the exhibition "Gender in IZOLYATSIA: The Right to Self-Construction under Patriarchy". Photos by Dmytro Serhieiev. All photos courtesy of the IZOLYATSIA Foundation

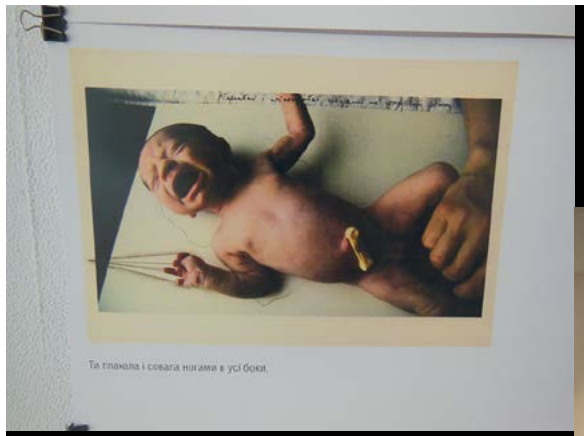
EXHIBITION WHAT IS FEMALE IN ME?
Date: November 19 – December 21, 2015

Location: The Visual Culture Research Center (44 Hlybochytska Street, Kyiv, Ukraine)
Curator: Oksana Briukhovetska
Some participants: Anna Baumgart, Oksana Briukhovetska, Kseniia Hnylytska, Ivona Demko, Hrytsia Erde, Alisiia Zhebrovska, Alina Kleytman, Urszula Kluz-Knopek, Alina Kopytsia, Iryna Kudria, Mariia Kulykovska, Anka Lesniak, Valentyna Petrova, Aleka Polis, Ewa Juszkiewicz, Zuzanna Janin, Alina Yakubenko.

The general layout and some works of the exhibition "What Female Is Female in Me?" All photos courtesy of Oksana Briukhovetska

EXHIBITION MOTHERHOOD
Date: March 6 – 19, 2015

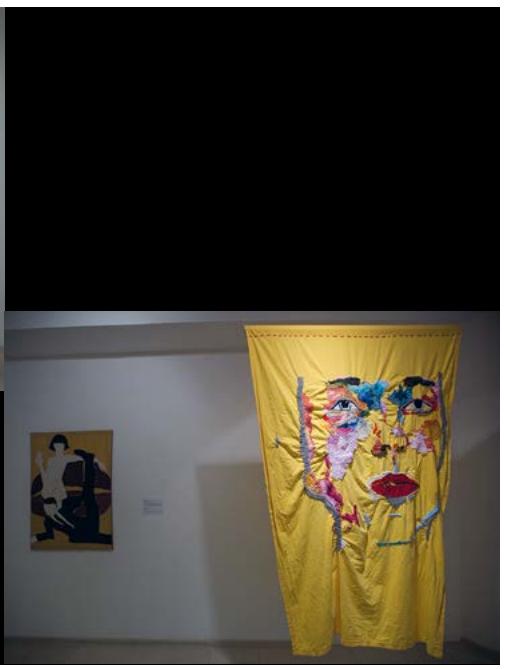
Location: The Visual Culture Research Center (44 Hlybochytska Street, Kyiv, Ukraine)
Curator: Oksana Briukhovetska
Some participants: Oksana Briukhovetska, Maryna Vinnik, Anna Vitt, Kseniia Hnylytska, Masha Godovannaya, Alina Kleytman, Joanna Raikowska, Emma Torsander, Anna Fabricius, Martha Frey, Tatiana Fyodorova, Elzbieta Jablonska, Alina Yakubenko.



The general view and some works displayed at the exhibition "Motherhood".
All photos courtesy of Oksana Briukhovetska

EXHIBITION TEXTUS. EMBROIDERY, TEXTILE, FEMINISM
Date: March 8 – April 9, 2017

Location: The Visual Culture Research Center (44 Hlybochytska Street, Kyiv, Ukraine)
Curator: Oksana Briukhovetska
Some participants: Sofia Vremyennaya, Kseniia Hnylytska, Anna Zvyagintseva, Alina Kleytman, Alina Kopytsia, Tetiana Kornieieva, Iryna Kudria, Oksana Briukhovetska, Valentyna Petrova, Anna Sorokovaya, Iryna Stasiuk, Olesia Trofymenko, The Shvems, Anna Shcherbyna.



The general view and some works of the exhibition "TEXTUS. Embroidery, Textile, Feminism". All photos courtesy of Oksana Briukhovetska

EXHIBITION A SPACE OF ONE'S OWN
Date: October 30, 2018 – January 6, 2019

Location: The PinchukArtCentre (1/3-2 Velyka Vasylkivska/Baseina Street, Kyiv, Ukraine)
Curators: Tatiana Kochubinska and Tetiana Zhmurko
Some participants: Yevheniia Bielorusets, Yana Bystrova, Kateryna Bilokur, Kateryna Yermolaieva, Marharyta Zharkova, Anna Zvyagintseva, Semen Yoffe, Zhanna Kadyrova, Oksana Kazmina, Alevtina Kakhidze, Alina Kleytman, Alina Kopytsia, Oksana Pavlenko, Mariia Prymachenko, Polina Raiko, Vlada Ralko, Maryna Skugarieva, Hanna Sobachko-Shostak, Mykola Trokh, Oleksandr Chekmeniov, Oksana Chepelyk and Anna Shcherbyna.

The general view and some works displayed at the exhibition "A Space of One's Own".
All photos by Maksym Bilousov

THE VICTOR PINCHUK FOUNDATION

This is an independent private international charitable organization.

The foundation was established in 2006 by the businessman and public figure Victor Pinchuk. The objective of the Foundation is to enable new generations to change the country and the world for the better. To achieve this objective, it has been developing projects and building partnerships within Ukraine and abroad for over a decade. Since 2006, over 125 million US dollars has been invested in projects aiming to transform Ukraine.

The Victor Pinchuk Foundation's projects include the Cradles of Hope network of newborn care centers, Ukraine's largest private nationwide support program for talented youth ZAVTRA.UA, the World Studies educational project (it allocates grants to Ukrainians that cover higher education abroad), and the contemporary art center PinchukArtCentre, which is the largest art center in Ukraine and the Eastern European region providing free access to contemporary art that inspires new thinking.

The Foundation supports the international network YES (Yalta European Strategy), established in 2004; it is the largest non-governmental platform in Ukraine and the region working to promote Ukraine's integration into Europe and the world.

The Foundation has also initiated and provided grant support for the creation of a nationwide online platform called the Ukrainian Philanthropic Exchange, which aims to develop civic philanthropy in this country. The Foundation is a member of the European Foundation Centre and the Ukrainian Philanthropists Forum, it also cooperates with the Clinton Global Initiative, the Atlantic Council, the Tony Blair Faith Foundation and other non-governmental organizations.

PINCHUK ART CENTRE,

established in September 2006 by Ukrainian businessman and philanthropist Victor Pinchuk, is the largest and most dynamic private contemporary art center in Central and Eastern Europe. More than 2.7 million people, mostly young Ukrainians, have visited the PinchukArtCentre since 2006. During its existence, the PinchukArtCentre has presented works of over 150 artists from all over the world in Ukraine, offering free access to new ideas, views, and emotions.

Being one of the projects of the Victor Pinchuk Foundation, the art center promotes the development of talents and civil society, upholds the values of freedom, democracy, individuality, and critical thinking.

For more than ten years, the art center has been the only place in Ukraine to offer a consistent program, including large solo exhibitions, thematic displays built around new works by leading world artists, and persistent work designed to nourish and support the new Ukrainian art scene.

Through exhibitions and a dynamic public outreach program, the art center has become a hotbed of intellectual and artistic energy that helps to shape the consciousness of a new generation, make it capable of thinking beyond the ordinary, and empowers these new generations with the ability to modernize and change society.

The art center's programs appeal to national identity and act as a response to international challenges. Its work is aimed at introducing to the general public the world's leading artists. The PinchukArt-Centre is investing in a new generation. In 2009, the Centre founded the PinchukArt-Centre Prize for contemporary young Ukrainian artists under the age of 35 and the Future Generation Art Prize which is the first global art award for young artists from around the world. With these bi-annual awards, the PinchukArtCentre has become a leading hub for the best young artists both around the world and in Ukraine.

The PinchukArtCentre represented Ukraine at the 2007, 2009, and 2015 Venice Biennales and organized events in the framework of the 2011, 2013, 2017, and 2019 Biennales' parallel programs.

In 2016, the PinchukArtCentre launched the Research Platform, which is an open platform for intellectual exploration and research aimed at creating a living archive of Ukrainian art from the early 1980s to the present. Available to all, the Research Platform is a cutting-edge project designed to preserve, catalog, and rethink historical information that is vital to critical reflection on the Ukrainian identity today and tomorrow.

THE PINCHUK ART CENTRE RESEARCH PLATFORM

The Research Platform is an open platform for thought, research, and dialogue, established at the PinchukArtCentre in February 2016, which deals with contemporary Ukrainian art and combines research with exhibitions and educational projects.

The Research Platform has become one of the largest centers for studying contemporary Ukrainian art. Thanks to institutional cooperation and the support of individuals who have donated personal archives and shared little-known information, it has accumulated a wealth of material.

The mission of the Research Platform is to preserve, catalog, and rethink the information collected. It is an academic project designed to create a living archive of Ukrainian contemporary art from the early 1980s to the present. The Research Platform team studies the broad institutional and personal context of artistic practices in Ukraine and sets the stage for further analysis of generational change. This approach encourages new interpretations and re-reading of the recent history of Ukrainian art.

The research platform is open to establishing partnerships in Ukraine and beyond, to sharing knowledge and experience in the field of Ukrainian art and archiving.

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Alevtina Kakhidze
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The Odesa Museum of Contemporary Art
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The CSM Center for Contemporary Art
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and all others who contributed to the creation of this book

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