

STYLES AND DIRECTIONS OF CONTEMPORARY UKRAINIAN FINE ARTS IN THE CONTEXT OF WORLD TRENDS

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Abstract: The article represents an attempt to comprehend specific features of contemporary Ukrainian arts and its development within the landscape of the trends in world fine arts in the 21st century – in particular, transformation of approaches, concepts, techniques and materials used, as well as the phenomenon of globalization in arts. A description and analysis of the works of several Ukrainian painters and sculptors is presented. Transformation and prospects of Ukrainian fine arts during the current wartime are considered.

Keywords: fine arts, contemporary art, Ukrainian art, arts trends, transformation.

1 Introduction

Art is the best medium for expressing the essence of a certain period. The creative world is made up of manifestations such as painting, sculpture, architecture, and more; these are the live reflections of society and its forces. In an environment that is fragile, nervous, non-linear, and unintelligible, it is imperative to adopt an inventive attitude [6], and this completely applies to the fine arts.

Author and anthropologist Jamais Cascio claims that humanity has reached a new era. He created the acronym “BANI”, which stands for brittle, anxious, nonlinear, and incomprehensible, to represent how many of us view the world. The following is a synopsis of BANI world [14]:

- **Brittle:** Though they seem strong and adaptable, society’s mechanisms are actually fragile. When under pressure, they break.
- **Anxious:** The sense of approaching catastrophe. It originates from a perception that the systems we depend on are not trustworthy. Humans are burdened with this existential menace.
- **Non-Linear:** Things happen in an erratic and disproportionate way. It is difficult or impossible to determine cause and effect. One such example is Covid. A virus that started in a Chinese bazaar eventually spread over the entire world. Global events also have exaggerated highs and lows.
- **Incomprehensible:** People look for solutions to issues that they do not fully comprehend. Our solutions fall short and do not address the problem. This makes people feel more hopeless and anxious.

Instability and unpredictability of the environment find their manifestation in fine art.

“Color over neutrals” is one of the defining themes in fine art today [13]. Artists will employ color more deliberately and expressively in order to arouse viewers’ energizing feelings and give places a stunning burst of brightness. Geometric patterns and forms in art are another fascinating trend. These forms can be seen in textiles and ceramics in addition to paintings and sculptures. A good example that combines both of these tendencies in one image is the one below (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. “Phygital Cities” by SurR.Ai is available as NFT on Rarible marketplace & as a fine art print on demand

The art sector is still evolving as we go into 2024, driven by changes in customer tastes, market factors, and technology breakthroughs. Convergence of digital and physical art is one of the biggest trends. With more and more artists and collectors seeing digital art as a valid and valued medium, the distinction between these two domains becomes increasingly hazy. The emergence of NFTs (Non-Fungible Tokens), which have completely changed the market for and ownership of art, is what is driving this change. As digital art platforms grow, artists have more ways to connect with people across the world, and collectors gain from blockchain technology’s security and transparency [15]. The art of 2024 promises to be a remarkable journey into uncharted territories of human imagination in a world where every stride toward advancement opens up new creative opportunities.

Artists are increasingly incorporating elements of their native cultures and customs into their works in this age of globalization and uniformity. They investigate their past and origins, drawing inspiration from them and utilizing them to convey their own character [5].

Moreover, intriguingly, the art industry is also becoming green in 2024, favoring more ecologically friendly creations [12]. A growing number of artists are incorporating ethical principles into their work, reflecting a societal commitment to using the arts to address urgent environmental issues. The comeback of natural materials and colors in art is another important factor. Natural dyes and materials are seeing a renaissance, much like vinyl has in recent years. This is an illustration of the “green” revolution taking place in the art world, where every brushstroke is a powerful link to the planet and a reminder of our interdependence with it. Ecological art encourages people to reconsider their relationship with the environment and increases public awareness of environmental challenges through these creative manifestations. It inspires us to think about the potential worth and beauty found in sustainable practices and the protection of the environment. It will become routine for them to include recycled materials and natural materials like wood and fabrics into their works, giving us artwork that is kind to the environment as well as our eyes. In particular, some African artists that are leading the way in environmentally conscious art include El Anatsui, Ifeoma Anyaeji, Chibuikwe Ifedilichukwu, Yusuf Grillo, Ghada Amer, Ibrahim Afegbua and Romuald Hazoumè.

The creation of new art forms and the emergence of new trends in the visual arts have been greatly aided by the past few decades. Our lives have been profoundly altered by the technology revolution, and this is clearly shown in the way we see and interpret art. Art is no longer limited to the confines of canvas and paper thanks to the enormous expansion of the visual structures associated with the term. Additionally, artists are experimenting and pushing the boundaries of their creativity. Artists in India and elsewhere are experimenting with new media such as computer paintings, graphics, installation, video

installation, land art, body art, street paints, mask creation, digital photography, mixed media, and installation art. To produce fresh and intriguing pieces of art, artists are experimenting with various waste materials. Nearly all modern painters, particularly the younger generation of artists, are investigating novel approaches to the portrayal of art.

According to O. Kashshay [8], a Ukrainian researcher, there are natural questions that arise when considering the obvious processes of Ukraine's integration into the global cultural and artistic space. These processes were significantly accelerated in response to the need to defend one's own national identity and demonstrate one's own accomplishments. What makes modern Ukrainian art unique, and what is its contextual model? What impact do geopolitical changes throughout the world have on the style and substance of Ukrainian artists' visual practices? And the furthest question to be researched and examined is: What impact did Russia's war against Ukraine have on these processes?

2 Materials and Methods

The specificity of this study involves the use of a methodology whose principles and methods belong to the research apparatus of the humanities. In the work, the authors used general scientific methods of synthesis and analysis, modeling and reconstruction, the interpretive method, the system method in the study of the phenomena of art and culture. The following methods were used as special methods of research: cultural-philosophical, comparative, cultural-historical, cross-cultural.

3 Results and Discussion

The development of art production techniques and technologies under the influence of scientific discoveries and globalization processes stimulated the formation of new layers of representation in the visual arts: traditional art represented reality, postmodernism represented ready-made representations of reality, and contemporary art represents postmodernism, reflecting a synthesis of art and innovative media technologies that shift interest from the work of art itself to the technique of its production. The dominance of the virtual temporal-topological mode of presentation of contemporary art is presented as a result of the dynamic interrelation of socio-cultural and technological processes, in which each new formula representing reality quickly loses its relevance, which leads to the intensification of the process of artifacts production [1]. The global art space is decentralized: the dominance of Western trends in art is giving way to global cultural values, in which the search for new publicly accessible visual means and a new expressive language of art is of great importance [5].

A new age of art has begun in the twenty-first century. The popularity of postmodernism, modernism, and all other forms of art has increased. Globalization and cultural changes like the digital revolution have spurred the development of this new medium, and there are now more avenues than ever for ideas to be expressed through visual art.

A new style of painting has gained prominence in the twenty-first century. A greater emphasis on realism has replaced pop art, abstract art, and other dominant genres from the past. In actuality, a lot of modern painters have started fusing still life themes into their pieces. Although this new style is contemporary, its forms and colors frequently harken back to the Renaissance and ancient master paintings. For many years, abstract painters have been experimenting with novel ways to convey their thoughts, and the present is no different. Themes of mankind and our relationship to environment are frequently explored in these paintings. While some painters add more abstract aspects, others use the human form as a key motif in their work. To create a collection that flows, these contemporary pieces are frequently combined with more conventional ones. This collection of artworks includes both realistic landscapes and abstract compositions, as well as everything in between [4].

Over the last century, modern art has expanded dramatically, but it has also profited from the contributions of artists from many various countries. While contemporary artists are not limited to any one origin or race, many draw inspiration from their own ancestry. Indigenous artists' contemporary works frequently address the problems that many of them encounter, such as marginalization, poverty, and oppression. The relationship that indigenous people have to their culture and land is frequently the subject of these modern works by indigenous artists. Numerous of these quirky pieces honor the natural world's splendor and the relationship between humans and animals [4].

Contemporary artists from many different cultures have incorporated elements from African art into their work. These works often highlight the beauty of the African continent and its rich traditions. Contemporary artists have taken inspiration from the art of the Bush, which flourished in the areas that are now part of Zimbabwe and South Africa. Contemporary artists have also incorporated rock art into their work, which dates back thousands of years to many different cultures [10]. These paintings often explore themes of nature and humanity, often using the African landscape as a central motif. Some of these works are abstract while others are more figurative. They may also be realistic in style, showing the beauty of the African landscape while incorporating symbolic elements.

Asian art is frequently associated with shamanic traditions and is distinguished by its use of natural materials such as wood, stone, and clay. Incorporating both digital and natural materials into their paintings, contemporary painters have also taken inspiration from Asian art. While digital Asian art sometimes has a more global vibe, traditional Asian art is frequently influenced by Buddhism, Hinduism, and other religions. Asian religious iconography is frequently included into these modern Asian artists' creations. While some of these pieces are more abstract, others are more representational. Other Asian modern works concentrate on social and cultural subjects including politics, feminism, and immigration.

Latin American art has been infused into the works of contemporary artists from a wide range of cultural backgrounds. These pieces frequently draw attention to how beautiful the scenery is in this region of the world, which is frequently defined by thriving towns, beaches, and lush rain forests. Incorporating both digital and natural materials into their paintings, contemporary painters have also taken inspiration from Latin American art. These modern pieces by Latin American artists frequently examine identity and how immigration shapes it. Some of these pieces are more abstract, while others could be more representational. A few of these pieces deal with societal topics including feminism and immigration [10].

There are several variants in the European art heritage, all of which are rooted in distinct regional traditions. These components have been used by contemporary artists in their works, frequently to examine the contrast between light and dark. These pieces frequently have a Gothic vibe to them and use light and shadow to uncanny effect. These modern pieces by European painters frequently examine symbolism, including that found in Egyptian hieroglyphs and Slavic runes. While some of these pieces are more abstract, many of them are representational.

Within the context of European art heritage and innovation, Ukrainian fine art represents a quite unusual phenomena. The historical foundation of the Ukrainian national painting school was academism and realism. It was established in the twentieth century. Artists who studied at professional art academies or other institutions during the turn of the 19th and early 20th centuries - many of them European - actively participated in international art exhibitions, and integrated their experiences into the establishment of Ukrainian art schools were responsible for the country's high standard of art education. However, the country's cultural space was greatly impacted by the swift social and political change that occurred in the 1990s as a result of Ukraine's independence. A significant boost to the development of Ukrainian fine art came at the beginning of the twentieth

century, in the early nineties. Artists have unrestricted access to travel, study modern art, and reach their full potential abroad. Ideological precepts and a burdensome system of state regulation of culture vanished together with the collapse of the Iron Curtain. A new generation of masters emerged in these circumstances, one that was approachable in their artistic endeavors and open to the outside world. Their works may be found in private collections and auctions, and their names are well-known even outside of Ukraine.

Ivan Marchuk is one of the names of contemporary Ukrainian painters. Marchuk opposed the aesthetic principles of socialist realism, therefore even though he was actively exhibiting his work until the late 1980s, the Community of Artists of the Ukrainian SSR did not acknowledge his work. He left his home country of Australia in 1989 and resided in Canada, the United States, and Australia. It was not until 2001 that the artist made his way back to Ukraine that he began painting and actively participated in the public life of the nation. Samples of Marchuk's painting are presented in Figure 2.



Figure 2. "Cornflowers" and "Winter", Ivan Marchuk

The maestro himself claims that his creative journey may be split into twelve distinct phases, each distinguished by a unique painting style and technique. The artist himself is unable to pinpoint the exact number of paintings he created or the course of each one's development. Marchuk's distinctive painting technique was dubbed "plontanism" because of his love of "collecting" pictures on canvases using strips and threads. The master's creations are highly valued globally and may be found on display in renowned museums in the United States, the European Union, Turkey, Thailand, Jordan, Tunisia, and other nations. Regretfully, the maestro still lacks a museum in Ukraine, despite his enormous contribution to the history of fine arts in both the country and beyond the world. It could take a few decades before we can truly recognize the scope of Marchuk's creative talent.

Another Ukrainian artist who should be mentioned in relation to the subject at hand is Oleksandr Roitburd. Beginning his career in the 1970s, this brilliant painter from Ukraine embodies the postmodernist tendency in his work. In 1983, Roitburd's artwork was first displayed to the public at the Union of Artists, and two years later, he held his first solo exhibition. The artist believes that postmodernism is a worldview and cannot be "found," nevertheless he is regarded as one of the pioneers of Ukrainian postmodernism. The master's work is permeated with the ideas of free play with meanings and the dismantling of conventional value systems. Different from the postmodernist perspective,

Roitburd's paintings display a typical blend of imagery from many cultures and eras [3]. Samples of Roitburd's paintings are presented in Figure 3.



Figure 3. "Rousseau in primitive bliss", and "Skovoroda in the garden of divine songs", Oleksandr Roitburd

The paintings of Roitburd are highly regarded overseas and may be found in museums both in the US and other nations. "Farewell, Caravaggio!" is the artist's most well-known work. (It sold for \$97.2 thousand in 2009). Roitburd had the chance to actively impact Ukraine's cultural life in addition to painting. He has been in prominent roles at the Odesa Art Museum, the Soros Center for Contemporary Art in Odesa, the Helman Gallery in Kyiv, and the association "New Art" from 1993 [3].

The representative of the Lviv School of Painting, another Ukrainian artist named Yuriy Kokh, claimed that upon entering the studio and inhaling the scent of oil paints, he made the decision to dedicate his life to the arts. He was a part of the "Way" movement from 1988 to 1992, which looked for fresh conceptual, ideological, and artistic-stylistic approaches. The course of this association's activities greatly influenced the artistic endeavors of contemporary Lviv artists. Koch has taken part in hundreds of exhibits in the USA, the EU, and the Ukraine since 1984. Koch describes the artist's approach as a "metaphysical mannerism", yet it is more akin to magical realism. The creative tale frequently takes place on Lviv's streets. Below are two images of Kokh (refer to Figure 4).

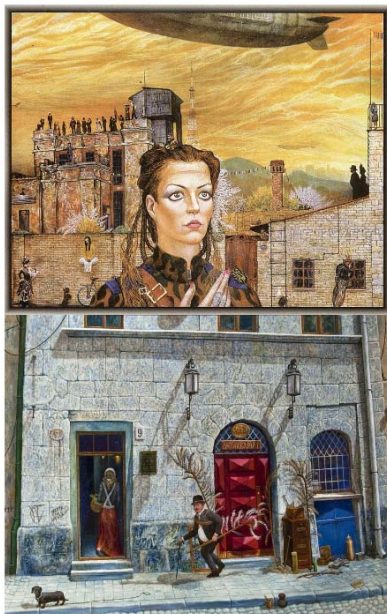


Figure 4. "Olga Litunka", and "Antiques", Yuriy Kokh

One of the world's most famous representatives of modern Ukrainian art is Anatoly Kryvolap. The artist produces beautiful paintings in the non-figurative genre; the observer is drawn to the color rather than the form. The maestro claims that in an attempt to give the landscape more emotional expressiveness, Kryvolap concentrated on color during a creative endeavor that resulted in the creation of his unique style. Inciting in the spectator "a state against which you feel immersed in the mystical dream of nature" is the author's stated internal purpose [9]. According to Forbes magazine, Kryvolap is one of the most famous and most expensive artists of Ukrainian contemporary art, whose works can be found in the best museum and private collections. His works samples are presented in Figure 5.



Figure 5. "March" and "Cloud", Anatolii Kryvolap

Speaking about the Ukrainian art of sculpture of the beginning of the 21st century, it is appropriate to note, in particular, the collective exhibition "Sculpture" in the National Museum in Lviv named after A. Sheptytsky (February 4-March 8, 2016), which is a particularly representative section of modern Ukrainian sculpture. Such a number of recognized artists-

sculptors from different regions of Ukraine are rarely united: Petro Antip (Horlivka, Donetsk region), Vasyl Yarych (Lviv), Oleksandr Dyachenko (Kyiv), Volodymyr Kochmar (Kharkiv), Valery Pirogov (Kyiv), Oleg Kapustyak (Lviv). This is the generation of sculptors born in the 1950s-1970s [11]. The stone sculpture of Petro Antip (Figure 6) is monumental in character and design. The theme of Ukrainian antiquity and archaism can be clearly read in the sculptor's works. The artist manifests himself with an eclectic creative philosophy, which includes figurative symbolism, realism and exclusively individual expressive abstractionism. Using the fundamental geometric forms of a pyramid, a circle, a cube, and others, P. Antip seems to enter the realm of cosmic eternity inherent in the monumentalism of Ancient Egypt.



Figure 6. A fragment of the exposition hall of the works of Petro Antip

Oleksandr Dyachenko is one of the few Ukrainian sculptors whose works are distinguished by the special profundity of images that tend towards generalizations, universalism, and monumentality. The artist's creativity is based primarily on the form and character of the material in which he works. Among the works of O. Dyachenko, figurative and portrait sculptures made of stone, fireclay and bronze are the most common. The architecture of large building forms, with which fireclay sculptures are endowed, has not only a visual-optical, but also a constructive-physical character: to prevent subsidence during firing, hollow sculptures have a structure of stiffening ribs inside - arches, buttresses.

O. Kapustyak's sculptures are no less strong in terms of their internal architecture. The sculptor's wide range of search for ideological and plastic form ranges from naturalistic figurative to abstraction. The monumental qualities of sculpture for O. Kapustyak are manifested in the emphasis on the most basic and in the absence of non-essential details and literary narration. In a number of works, Kapustiak does not avoid entering into the temporal and historical drag, creating lyrical and poetic images of archaic heroes. Laconicism and simplicity of forms are close for the artist [2].

The representatives of the Odessa sculptural school proved themselves as unsurpassed masters of lyrical fantasies, carnival laughter and Mediterranean pagan looseness. The mischievous-romantic images of the sculptor E. Lelechenko seem to balance on the border of "heavenly" ("The Fourth Horseman") and "messy", according to the apt expression of the local art critic L. Saulenko ("Fish-fish, or Sit on a fish and eat a fish"; "Lolita" as a variant of erotic sculpture; "Waiting for the triennial, or Game of beads").

The sculptural animalism of L. Subangulova is imbued with the idea of humanity, a world of friendly contact creatures ("Bird", "Beast", "Pelican", "Rhino", "Griffon", testifying to the limitless expressive possibilities of fireclay (fire-resistant clay), decorative in shape and mythopoetic by creative design [7].

Digital art from Ukraine is equally intriguing, particularly because of its distinct inventiveness. Oleksii Sai is particularly well-known for creating Excel-art, an original work of art. The artist has been utilizing Microsoft Excel tools to create visual

graphics since 2007. This application appears to be the least conducive to creative expression; instead, it works best for quickly creating lists and graphs and budgeting. Sai critiques the global corporate culture in this way, and his creations uphold the mechanization and continuity of production, even in the arts. A piece of his art is seen in Figure 7. When examining Sai's paintings closely, one finds that although they appear to be a cohesive landscape from a distance, they really break down into lines, numbers, columns, and other graph and chart features up close. Similar to this, our lives in the modern world "disintegrate" into bank accounts, receipts, and other remnants of civilization.



Figure 7. *Brave, 2019 (from Sai's website)*

Crisis situations always give birth to a burst of creativity in Ukraine, and the current full-scale war is no exception. The newest Ukrainian written and visual culture is developing intensively even in such conditions. Nonetheless, the influence of the conflict on Ukrainian fine art was clear. One of the striking illustrations of art produced during the Russia-Ukraine War is the installation "To Plant a Stick" by Anna Zvyagintseva. Lines from Dmytro Pavlychko's poetry, "Like a leafless tree, My soul stands in the fields", are one of its components. The artist discovered the poem in her grandfather's collection following his death in 2016. Stanislav Turina's "Thank you" art series illustrates the intersubjective realm of assistance and caring. In order to proclaim the future, Tamara Turliu embroidered the phrases "this is the beginning of trees, this is how a pile of stems looks" on light-colored, white linens using black threads. One windowless, roofless chamber eventually included the famous poet's lyric from the 1960s, the common phrase "thank you" inscribed on a frail napkin, and the poetic observation of a young artist (see Figure 8). The apartment display "Everyone is Afraid of the Baker, but I am Grateful", organized by Kateryna Iakovlenko and held at the end of August 2022 in her own house - which had been devastated by an enemy shell - featured the works of Zvyagintseva, Turina, and Turliu.



Figure 8. Stanislav Turina, "Thank You," drawing, 2022

The landmark performance is "Freedom Is Not Free" by ASAKI - an artist of Kazakh origin. She has been living in Ukraine since she was three years old and considers herself Ukrainian, speaks Ukrainian and has Ukrainian citizenship. ASAKI worked with

"emotionally charged material" - soil that was collected from all territories of Ukraine where active hostilities were taking place (except for Luhansk region and Crimea, as team of the artist could not get there). The soil was collected from the bottom of the Kakhovsky and Pechenez reservoirs, destroyed by the Russians, from Chornobayivka and other places, coal from Donbas. ASAKI made an installation in an aquarium, which she filled layer by layer with Ukrainian soil. The land from the frontline and occupied territories became the material for reflection on the topic of freedom (see Figure 9). According to the artist, Ukrainian freedom is a free land soaked in tears and blood.



Figure 9. ASAKI's work on the theme of war and freedom

Thirteen contemporary Ukrainian artists from the front lines of art were featured in the 2024 Mason Exhibitions in Arlington show "A Closer Look: Conflicted Art from Ukraine", which offered artistic reactions to violence. Through media such as painting, sculpture, film, photography, and installations, these artists investigate important topics along the lines of conflict. Their creations encourage and exemplify perseverance in the face of hardship by starting a conversation between viewers and the terrible truths of war.

Simple pen drawings by Kristina Otchich-Cherniak highlight urgent problems such as the needless death of animals, the brave defiance of women against torture and rape, the terrible massacre of civilians, and the tenacity of survivors in the face of bombs and air attacks. Old chess boards, which represent a strategic battlefield where opposing forces fight for victory and frequently find themselves stuck in situations from which there is no way out, serve as an inspiration to Natalia Shynkarenko. In her White Town series, Elena Alyabyeva portrays a path from hopelessness, loss, and desperation to stability, rebirth, and a renewed sense of purpose. Alyabyeva portrays the recollections of her surroundings by using black paper to represent the gloom of the conflict in Ukraine in contrast to the hopeful images of a white town. Natalia Amirova's watercolor portrait paintings, which appear to be of ordinary people, really disclose buried psychological anguish that splits groups and cultures. Her storylines are derived from background in journalism and Ukrainian needlework (see Figure 10).



Figure 10. Natalia Amirova, *Kiss Before the Evacuation, 2022 watercolor on paper, 12x16 in*

In overall, Ukrainian fine art during years of war predominantly acquired a touch of tragic worldview, surrealist motives, theme of blood, death, aggression and revenge. At the same time, addressing to folk motives, 'working' with topics of revival, peace, and nature are traced. Probably, during the coming years, including after war, a convergence of these two conceptual directions will be observed, but the influence of surrounding environment is inevitable – thus, in today BANI world exact forecasts are unlikely possible.

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